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Independent Diviners in Classical Greece

(5th and 4th centuries B.C.): A Study

MPhil Thesis of Louise J. Gaukroger

Abstract

The main aim of this thesis is to establish as firmly as possible the importance of independent diviners in classical Greece. Independent diviners were the mobile means of communicating with the divine and as such were essential to the everyday practices of the ancient Greeks. Historical events unfolded as a direct result of the recommendations made by independent diviners and their interpretations were key considerations in the decision making processes of leading statesmen, generals and even kings. It is essential to establish independent diviners firmly in their appropriate context by exploring their origins in myth and the achievements of the earliest seers, through to the evolution of the role and their influence during the classical period.

This thesis is an original contribution to our understanding of independent diviners as it is a comprehensive study reevaluating the need for, the importance of, and the expectations of seers in ancient Greece during the classical period. This work aims to improve not only our understanding of these individuals, but also our understanding of divination, ancestry, tradition, decision-making, the balance of power where seers are concerned, and ancient Greek attitudes towards them. In this thesis I treat two types of religious specialist, known more specifically as a χρησμολόγος and a μάντις. I refer to both throughout the work under the general title of an independent diviner for ease of communication.

This topic will be approached comparatively by exploring the role and expectations of seers in myth and evaluating how this appeared to change by the end of the classical period. After considering the definition, ancestry and acquisition of mantic ability, the evolution and application of the role, the divinatory methods involved in practising the τέχνη and the treatment and reception of independent diviners within the scope of this study, it is hoped that this thesis will have emphasised the importance of both divination and independent diviners as the means by which divine communication was implemented and interpreted, and in turn, how decisions of remote importance were settled upon.

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Introduction

The art of divination is something which has fascinated mankind for centuries. Humanity seems to have an innate need to search for something greater than itself, whether that urge is satisfied through scientific enquiry or religion in some form. A wish to communicate with gods has evolved from this curiosity, as once the presence of a deity or higher being has been realised, it is natural to want to communicate with it, as this provides a personal connection between the enquirer and deity. Any worshipper would wish for their god or gods to know them and to watch over them: therefore, it is commonly believed that the relationship between deity and worshipper is enabled by some form of divine communication.¹

This is where divination features and it has taken a variety of forms in countless religions. The scope of this thesis is the divination practised in fifth and fourth century B.C. Greece, but the focal point of this work is exploring the individuals responsible for initiating these divine communications at that time, how the role evolved from its mythic origins and the different methods of divination which they practised. These individuals merit scrutiny because kings, commanders and entire city states made decisions on the basis of their interpretations of divine signs and recommendations for future courses of action. Therefore, the interpretations made by these individuals impacted greatly upon subsequent events, as the consequent decisions made by their employer decided the course of ancient Greek history.

Independent diviners, often referred to as seers, soothsayers or oracle mongers, were individuals who wielded an extraordinary amount of power because of their talent for understanding and communicating divine will. In essence, they were mobile specialists: thus they provided a far more accessible means of divine communication than the remote and often overcrowded oracular centres.² As a result, talented independent diviners were highly sought

¹ For an introduction to ancient Greek religion, see Harrison (1903); Dodds (1951); Nilsson (1969); Dietrich (1974); Vernant (1976); Versnel (1981); Burkert (1985a); Easterling and Muir (1985); Dietrich (1986); Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel (1994); Bremmer (1999); Ogden (2007) and Mikalson (2010). Burkert (1985a) has remained the most useful introduction to the subject.

² For further discussion of oracular centres and oracles, see Parke and Wormell (1956); Parke (1967) and (1972); Flacelière (1976); Parker (2000); Rosenberger (2001), Bowden (2005) and (2013) 41-60.

after.³ They were often employed to join military campaigns or the establishment of colonies, in order to provide an interpretative service for any enquiry or unexpected portent which might arise whilst away from home.

Independent diviners were useful for this purpose in any context and with the clear advantage of their immediate presence they could provide a swift response to alleviate any concerns or to recommend a course of action if required to. As the benefits of utilising such individuals for divine enquiry were evident, independent diviners were able to rise to established positions of prominence within ancient Greek city states and in some instances were able to contribute to and influence the politics therein.⁴

i). Thesis Outline:

This thesis aims to explore the purpose of independent diviners in classical Greece. More specifically, I hope to emphasise clearly how essential and all-encompassing divination was to the everyday practices of the ancient Greeks and how the work of these individuals as facilitators of divine communication impacted upon the course of historical events. It is necessary to establish independent diviners firmly in their appropriate context as individual religious institutions in their own right, from their origins in myth and the achievements of the founding seers, through to the evolution of the role and the contributions of independent diviners to the ancient Greek world until the campaigns and death of Alexander the Great.

This work is an original contribution to our understanding of independent diviners as it is a comprehensive study aiming to explore fully the need for, the evolution of and the capabilities of seers in ancient Greece during the classical period. This work aims to improve

Parke (1972) and Flacelière (1976) provide more general overviews of the subject. Rosenberger (2001) and Stoneman (2011) provide the most current book-length treatments of the subject.

³ The Spartans were very keen to enlist the services of the Elean seer Teisamenos after the Delphic Oracle pronounced that he would win five victories (Hdt. IX:33). See also Kett (1966) 71-73 and Roth (1982) 286. For a more detailed treatment of Teisamenos, see chapter III 79-81.

⁴ Lampon and Diopieithes are understood to have been both seers and statesmen during the fifth century B.C. and we are informed by Plutarch that Diopieithes was able to propose a decree in Athens, which suggests an impressive level of political influence for a religious specialist. See Plut. *Per.* 6 and Thuc. V:19 for Lampon and Plut. *Per.* 32 for Diopieithes and his decree. See also, Kett (1966) 33-35 and Roth (1982) 290-291 for Diopieithes, and Kett (1966) 54-57 and Roth (1982) 278 for Lampon.

not only our understanding of these individuals, but also our understanding of divination, ancestry, tradition, decision-making, the balance of power where seers are concerned, and ancient Greek attitudes towards them.

There are two types of independent diviner, a χρησμολόγος and a μάντις. The first chapter of this work aims to explore the similarities and differences between the two roles and explain why I am uniting both under the heading of an independent diviner. For the purposes of this introduction I will state now that in my opinion the two roles are generally synonymous, until certain circumstances in which there might be a need to differentiate between them, but a far more complete discussion of this can be found in chapter I.⁵

It is important to explain my decision to scrutinise these two particular roles for this study and not to incorporate any other, similar positions which some might argue merit a place in this work too. Suffice it to say at this juncture, I felt that certain other positions were not utilised or consulted with the same frequency as these two roles during the classical period to merit treatment in this particular study, and others had been designated too official a post within a Greek city state for their religious practices to be deemed ‘independent’.⁶ For the purpose of clarification, when I refer to seers in this thesis, I am referring to both χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες and do so merely to avoid overuse of the term independent diviner in some paragraphs.

Independent diviners maintained positions of prominence in the ancient Greek world for centuries. A strong focus on ancestry and tradition led to μάντιες from the classical period often tracing a long lineage back to famous seers from myth and they proudly aligned themselves with a particular ‘mantic’ family, as associations with these talented diviners seem to have assisted their employment prospects; as we shall see in chapter II.

Alongside this, chapter II explores the various methods recorded in the sources of how one acquires mantic abilities. The divine aspect of the bestowal of μαντική fades by the end

⁵ For a history of this debate see chapter I 21-27, see also Oliver (1952a) 6-11; Argyle (1970); Garland (1990) 82-85; Smith (1989) 142 n.6; Baumgarten (1998) 47; Olsen (1998) 269; Bowden (2003) 263-264; Dillery (2005) 170 and Flower (2008b) 61.

⁶ These other types of religious specialist will be explored briefly in chapter I 27-28.

of the classical period, and it is worth nothing here that there does not seem to have been one fixed method of receiving the τέχνη. What is already understood, however, is that membership of a mantic family implies a potentially inherent skill which in essence provides a ‘character reference’ for a μάντις and evidence suggests that this might have helped to improve their employment prospects in ancient Greece. In addition, the more renowned the mantic family, the more prominent the position of responsibility for the μάντις seems to have been.⁷ When χρησμολόγοι are scrutinised in the same manner, however, the results are far less clear, as they have no mythic origins and at present there is little evidence to suggest either the existence of ‘chresmologic’ families, or the same focus on ancestry that we see with μάντις.

What I find most worthy of exploration within this topic is the evolution of the role from the accounts that we have preserved in the literature of the original founding μάντις, through to the independent diviners of the classical period. As independent diviners have a long history serving either individuals or city states, it is certainly worth observing changes in the capabilities and expectations of seers over this passage of time, and this comparison is the main aim of chapter III. This chapter is also an opportunity to explore independent diviners in action, especially within the city state and during the foundation of a colony.

It is very difficult to explore the importance and role of seers from myth to the end of the classical period without also treating the methods of divination which they practised. The art of μαντική involved a wide-range of various methods of divination, yet the presence of an independent diviner does not seem to have been required in order for the enquirer to practise them successfully.

Despite this, the fact that independent diviners were able to maintain successful careers in ancient Greece for centuries suggests that even if their presence was not absolutely essential, it was most certainly preferred. In addition, continuing with the comparative approach between myth and the end of the classical period, it seems that certain types of divinatory practices were more or less prominent at different times. In fact, some methods of

⁷ Consider the established positions of members of the Iamidae and Clytiadae families at Olympia. See Weniger (1915) 53-115 for a list of seers at Olympia.

divination were not practised by μάντις of myth, and likewise, some of the more incredible methods of receiving and interpreting divine messages were not accessible to the independent diviners of history and most definitely not to a non-specialist.

Naturally, if a specialist in divine signs was to hand, especially when the enquirer was likely to have been under pressure to make an imminent decision or to provide an interpretation of some sort, surely it would have been foolish not to defer to more specialist judgement and skills if they were available. Each different method of divination seems to suggest a varying level of requirement for the skills of an independent diviner, and this, along with the mechanics of practising the τέχνη (as best we can gauge from the evidence), will be treated in chapter IV, with an especial focus on their application in ancient Greek warfare.

In order to understand the level of prominence held by independent diviners during the classical period, it is essential to explore their treatment in contemporary sources in order to try to glean ancient Greek attitudes towards them, as this helps us realise how independent diviners were able to perform the role in the way that they did for such a long duration of time. Thus, the treatment of these individuals by contemporary sources is explored and discussed in chapter V.

These chapters aim to bring together the various important aspects of what makes an independent diviner in ancient Greece and the contributions made to the evolution of the role by the end of the classical period. After considering the definition, ancestry and acquisition of mantic ability, the evolution and application of the role, the divinatory methods involved in practising the τέχνη and the treatment and reception of independent diviners within the scope of this study, it is hoped that this thesis will have emphasised the importance of both divination and independent diviners as the means by which divine communication was implemented and interpreted, and in turn, how decisions of remote importance were settled upon.

This needs to be emphasised, as the contributions of independent diviners were pivotal to the decision making process, and one of the main aims of this thesis is to ensure that divination maintains the prominent position that it deserves in our understanding and

acceptance of how the ancient Greeks made decisions, and as a result, how subsequent events unfolded.

ii). Methodology:

In order to understand truly how independent diviners evolved within ancient Greek civilisation, it is necessary to explore any sources that we have preserved detailing the events from myth to the end of the classical period. Certainly the accuracy and historicity of such accounts can most definitely be called into question, especially if they are not contemporary, but even if they are not completely correct, each account still reveals the attitudes towards independent diviners and the ideas and perceptions of that time which were in existence when each author was writing.

Alternatively, these accounts represent what the author considered ancient Greek attitudes to have been during the time to which they are referring. This in itself can prove to be useful in helping us to gain an understanding of reception, attitudes and perceptions from the classical period and beyond. A comparative approach between the seers of myth and those of the classical period is invaluable, as any notable changes in popularity and treatment of these individuals enables us to place independent diviners suitably in their context within different stages of ancient Greek myth and history, and this in turn allows us to see how attitudes towards independent diviners might have changed during this long period of prominence and influence.

There are a large number of sources referring to Athenian events in this work, but from the examples which I have used detailing seers and divinatory practices from Sparta and elsewhere in Greece, I feel that these demonstrate clearly enough where some conclusions are more widely applicable across ancient Greece rather than solely restricting them to Athens. As Nilsson says of oracles:

‘We hear so much of Athens because literature has so much to tell of this city, but we cannot doubt that oracles had a like importance in other Greek cities.’⁸

This same observation can be cautiously applied to independent diviners and divination, as oracles were most certainly entwined within these fields, and as we shall see the use of independent diviners and divination was prevalent throughout the ancient Greek world.

It has also been necessary to include the works of the ancient playwrights who feature independent diviners in this thesis, as even if these are not necessarily a reflection of each playwright’s personal point of view on divination and its practitioners, they still felt the need to include them in these works and to portray them in a way which must have been relatable to the audience, and this in itself is useful to us. In addition, there is also the occasional reference to works of art and architecture, as depictions of independent diviners and divinatory practices provide a valuable insight and can stimulate areas of discussion not always immediately obvious from written sources, due to the visual impact of the depictions themselves.

In summary, any evidence which was deemed applicable to this thesis and substantial enough to be discussed in significant detail was considered, although as can be seen in the prosopographies of independent diviners compiled by Kett and Roth, it was illogical to include a reference to each individual seer and their mentions in the sources, as this would not have been a particularly original approach to and treatment of this subject.⁹ Where individual historical independent diviners are discussed, however, I have included citations of their mentions in the works of Kett and Roth, so that further explorations of each individual can be undertaken by the reader if wished.

There is little focus in this work on the divinatory practices of other societies, as the thesis is already examining such a wide chronological scope in ancient Greek myth and

⁸ Nilsson (1972) 140.

⁹ For a prosopography of seers, see Kett (1966) 17-80 and Roth (1982) 268-287, although Roth treats χρησμολόγοι in a separate appendix and does not classify them with μάντιες. For a treatment of the χρησμολόγοι/μάντιες debate, see chapter I 21-27.

history.¹⁰ There are references to other cultures and practices where relevant, but the main intention of this thesis is to bring clarification to the place of seers and divination in the ancient Greek world alone.

iii). History of Scholarship:

It seems that scholarship in the area of Greek religion has shifted over the past century, as scholars began to recognise the risk of projecting their own bias and present understanding of history and religion onto their approaches to the subject.¹¹ There is a temptation to address the matter sceptically and to assume that the more intelligent members of ancient Greek society possessed the same understanding as we do now,¹² that surely such an untidy system of divination could not have been considered truly accurate. That the reason why there is so little evidence to support this concept is due solely to the fact that those more enlightened individuals realised that they needed to harness divination in order to achieve their goals by manipulating the masses with messages from the gods.

This concept might appeal to the cynic, but as ancient Greek divination survived as a system of divine communication for such a long period of time,¹³ then there must have been more to it than this rather negative approach suggests. Instead, we need to delve deeper into

¹⁰ The work of several authors already considers and compares attitudes and practices from many different societies, both ancient and modern. For an introduction to these more comparative studies see Halliday (1913), Flower (2008b) and most recently, Raphals (2013), who compares Chinese and ancient Greek divination, and Beerden (2013), who compares aspects of ancient Greek divination with Republican Rome and Neo-Assyrian Mesopotamia.

¹¹ Harrison (1903) and Halliday (1913) demonstrate the shift towards more anthropological approaches to the study of Greek religion, and there have been several works since which have become essential guides for other scholars. For an introduction to ancient Greek religion, see introduction 2.n.1. For ancient Greek divination see Bouché-Leclercq (1879-82) IV vols.; Halliday (1913), Park (1963) 195-209; Bloch (1963); Vernant et al. (1974); Burkert (1985a); Bloch (1986); Parker (2000) 76-108; Tedlock (2001) 189-197; Johnston and Struck (2005); Johnston (2008); Bonnechere (2010a) 145-159 and most recently Rosenberger (2013).

¹² How enlightened our own understanding of religion is can be debated for certain, although this particular discussion cannot be treated concisely enough in this work. For further reading on this, see Throer (1980).

¹³ Consider the long duration of success operation at the oracular centres in ancient Greece, Olympia and Delphi in particular. For more on this, see Parke (1967) for Olympia and (1972) for Delphi. For a treatment of the decline of independent diviners, see Bremmer (1996) 106-109 and Flower (2008b) 126-131. See also chapter V 176 and conclusion 205-206.

the subject and try to gain an understanding of what precisely divination is and what it meant to the ancient Greeks.

Divination is a system of divine communication which evolves from within a particular society. It originates from our own need to communicate with something greater than ourselves, which we believe wishes to share with us, on occasion, how subsequent events might unfold. Bloch defines divination as follows:

‘La divination est le produit d’une idee religieuse qui a, de tout temps, posséd  la conscience humaine, la foi en la Providence.’¹⁴

Systems of divination may vary among different societies, but some form of divination exists in most (if not every) culture in the modern world and has existed for thousands of years. Therefore, it cannot be considered primitive, and this in itself agrees with Bloch’s summation. Divination is fulfilling a cognitive requirement, in most aspects religious, but perhaps for some it is purely a desirable way of conducting one’s life.¹⁵

Divination is certainly systematic and we have already discussed the appeal of experiencing a feeling of reduced responsibility in the decision making process as a result of some sort of divinatory consultation.¹⁶ Yet from this, the importance of divination is clear.

The most comprehensive study of divination remains the four volume work of A. Bouch -Leclercq (1879-82), where he aimed to clarify the importance of divination by scrutinising a wide-range of source material. The first volume of the series explores the methods of divination which were practised in ancient Greece.¹⁷ There have been several smaller works on divination since, but none as inclusive. This work was followed in 1913 by

¹⁴ Bloch (1963) 3; See Beerden (2013) 19-42 for a more recent discussion on defining divination.

¹⁵ The renowned anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard himself admitted that he was perfectly content with adapting to using the poison oracle whilst living among the Azande. For further discussion of this and his work, see Flower (2008b) 105. See also, Evans-Pritchard (1937) and (1965) for an introduction to his work.

¹⁶ As Malkin states: ‘The social purpose of divination seems self-evident: to encourage, enhance authority, provide immediate and concrete religious answers and allay fears.’ (1987) 113.

¹⁷ See Bouch -Leclercq (1879) I:1-5 for an outline of the main aim of his work.

W. R. Halliday in his book *Greek Divination*, which was heavily influenced by the growing interest in the study of magic and mana. This influence led to conclusions which gave magic a prominent position in the origins of prophecy, which is perhaps undeserved.¹⁸

After this there was a relative lull in this area until the 1950s, after which the work of E. R. Dodds and J. H. Oliver in particular stimulated a shift in scholarly focus towards Greek religion and divination.¹⁹ Subsequent research produced both general studies of ancient Greek religion and more specifically targeted works within this field in areas such as sacrifice, oracles and religious officials. The research of H. W. Parke, M. P. Nilsson, J. P. Vernant, B. C. Dietrich, and W. Burkert in particular steered the development of our understanding of various aspects of ancient Greek religion and inspired continued research in this field.²⁰

Since the 1990s several scholars have emerged who have produced detailed studies of ancient Greek religion and the sub-categories therein. Of these works those by J. Bremmer, H. Bowden, M. Flower, S. I. Johnston, R. Parker and V. Rosenberger have proven most influential and distinguished in the area of ancient Greek divination.²¹

Before *The Seer in Ancient Greece* by M. Flower was published in 2008, there had never been a book-length treatment of seers in ancient Greece in any language.²² This study provided for the first time a comprehensive introduction to seers and their practices in the ancient Greek world and a suitable overview of both the expert and the novice. This book was intended to build upon the work of preceding scholars and successfully provides an articulate and engaging study.²³

It encompasses a wide range of sources, both ancient and modern, and draws upon anthropological material in order to draw phenomenological comparisons from current

¹⁸ Halliday (1913) 98 'Prophecy in his case (a mantis) at any rate begins in magic, and ends degenerate in a formal art.' Halliday also considered μάντις to be descended from the medicine man (1913) 57.

¹⁹ Dodds (1951); Oliver (1952a).

²⁰ Parke (1962) and (1972); Nilsson (1949), (1969) and (1972); Vernant (1976) and (1989); Dietrich (1974), (1986) and (1990), W. Burkert (1979), (1985a) and (1992).

²¹ Bremmer (1993), (1996) and (1999); Bowden (2003), (2005) and (2013); Dillery (2005) 167-231; Flower (2008a) and (2008b); Johnston (2005) and (2008); Parker (2000) and (2009) and Rosenberger (2001) and (2013).

²² See Flower (2008b) 3.

²³ Notably the prosopographies compiled by Kett (1966) 17-80 and Roth (1982) 268-287, along with the work of those cited above.

specialists in divination from other cultures with the hope of understanding how the seers in ancient Greece might have been perceived. In addition, Flower's acknowledgment of the influence of other civilisations on the evolution of ancient Greek divination contributes to a detailed and wide-ranging study of this subject.

Other works published since have explored categories within the field of seers and divination, but there has not yet been another treatment of seers of the same depth and quality as Flower's.²⁴ I hope that this thesis will build upon the recent work of scholars in this area, most notably the comprehensive work of Flower, by amalgamating and discussing some of the approaches and ideas which have surfaced since scholarly focus shifted in this direction and by adding my own interpretations. This in turn, I hope, will stimulate further discussion and research within this field.

iv). Belief and the Need to Communicate:

When studying religion it is impossible not to encounter the word 'belief'. Where religion is concerned, it seems to me that belief is something that you either innately possess; or you do not. It may certainly develop in time, but this change is not guaranteed.²⁵ Where the ancient Greeks are concerned, one can sensibly suggest that in all likelihood the vast majority of ancient Greeks (for one cannot overlook that there were likely to have been exceptions) believed in their gods. This is evident in the way religious practices were entwined into everyday life in the ancient Greek world.

At this juncture I must emphasise that I consider tradition to have played a pivotal role in the endurance of ancient Greek religious practices,²⁶ especially as ancient Greek

²⁴ Other works on seers and various aspects of divination which have emerged since Flower's book are Suárez (2009b); Parker (2009); Annus (2010); Foster (2010); Ogden (2010); Holmann (2011); Beerden (2013); Hansen (2013); Raphals (2013); Rosenberger (2013); Eidinow (2014) 55-95; Jameson (2014); Trampedach (2015).

²⁵ For further reading on this, see Dodds (1956); Nilsson (1969); Dietrich (1974); Jordan (1979); Pleket (1981) 178-183. Burkert (1985a); Gould (1985) 1-33; Van Straten (1981) 65-151; Lloyd-Jones (2001) 456-464; Motte (2002) 489-552; Mikalson (2010) and Naiden (2013a) 388-427.

²⁶ As Bonnechere states: 'Divination evolved little, because, if any field was ruled by tradition, it was that one which involved contact with the gods.' (2010a) 158.

religion did not follow a specific doctrine.²⁷ Certain ritual procedures were performed because this was how individuals were taught to communicate with the gods and these traditions were passed down not just within families, but within entire communities and city states. The need to communicate with the gods is the key factor here and this requirement ensured the persistence of these practices.

In ancient Greece an individual felt encouraged to communicate with the gods because they wanted the gods to favour them. The verbal procedure of presenting an offering to a deity would have been something along this format: 'Dear specific god, I would like to offer you X in the hope that you will give me Y.' Or: 'If you grant me Y, I will give you X.'²⁸ To not communicate with the gods was to live a life without their favour, and from what both the ancient sources and the archaeological evidence from oracular centres present, it seems that many people wished to maintain that communication, as if one failed to communicate with the gods in the accepted manner, one risked being accused of impiety and incurring the gods' wrath.²⁹

We know that studies exploring the divine, religious ritual and practices, and divination itself were produced,³⁰ and there is bountiful evidence from the classical period to indicate that institutions were still punishing both city states and individuals for religious offences.³¹ From these instances it is clear that in many areas of ancient Greece an awareness endured regard to pleasing the gods. It seems likely that a combination of long established traditional ritual practices and the social mind-set of the average ancient Greek meant that there was little scope for some when it came to questioning one's individual belief system.

The requirement to communicate with the gods and the need to obtain their favour seems to have been a regular feature of everyday life in ancient Greece. Perhaps this is why

²⁷ Vernant (1989) 163. See also, Ogden (2010) 158 on tradition and divination.

²⁸ Flower (2008b) 101-102.

²⁹ See n.2 for scholarship providing an introduction to the activities at oracular centres.

³⁰ For an overview of ancient scholarship in this area see Burkert (1985a) 305-337.

³¹ Consider the sacred fines imposed by the Delphic Amphictyonic assembly on city states during this period and see also Lysias *On the matter of the Olive Stump* for an example of an individual charged with a religious offence.

there is no literary evidence indicating an ancient treatise on Greek religion as an overarching concept which required scrutiny. As Vernant states:

‘This religious tradition was neither uniform nor strictly defined; its nature was not dogmatic in any way. It had no sacerdotal cast, no specialized clergy, no church, and no sacred book in which the truth was fixed once and for all. It had no creed that gave the faithful a coherent set of beliefs about the beyond.’³²

This is a perfectly reasonable assessment; in the same way that there are no accounts preserved detailing the precise procedure of a typical consultation of the oracle at Delphi. This is not, in my view, due to the fact that the procedure was highly secretive, as there is no evidence in the sources to suggest that Delphi was treated with the same curiosity as the Mysteries at Eleusis. The most rational explanation has already been suggested by Parke and Wormell, who believe that the procedure of the Delphic Oracle was common knowledge at the time and as such no ancient writer deemed it necessary to describe such matters in detail.³³

Undoubtedly the accessibility and location of oracular centres would have impacted upon the availability and frequency of oracular consultations. As a result of this other methods of divination developed, which were independent of oracular centres.³⁴ These other methods of communicating with the gods enabled enquirers to make on the spot consultations, interpretations, and subsequently, make imminent decisions with relative ease with the assistance of independent diviners.

v). Divination and decision making:

‘καὶ μελλόντων αὐτῶν, ἐπειδὴ ἐτοῖμα ἦν, ἀποπλεῖν ἢ σελήνη ἐκλείπει· ἐτύγγανε γὰρ πασσέληνος οὔσα. καὶ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι οἳ τε πλείους ἐπισχεῖν ἐκέλευον τοὺς στρατηγούς ἐνθύμιον ποιούμενοι, καὶ ὁ Νικίας

³² Vernant (1989) 163.

³³ Parke and Wormell (1956) I:17.

³⁴ For further information on the different methods of divination practised by independent diviners, see chapter IV 110-163.

(ἦν γάρ τι καὶ ἄγαν θειασμῶ τε καὶ τῷ τοιοῦτῳ προσκείμενος) οὐδ' ἂν διαβουλευσασθαι ἔτι ἔφη πρὶν, ὡς οἱ μάντιες ἐξηγοῦντο, τρὶς ἐννέα ἡμέρας μεῖναι, ὅπως ἂν πρότερον κινηθεῖη. καὶ τοῖς μὲν Ἀθηναίοις μελλήσασι διὰ τοῦτο ἡ μονὴ ἐγεγένητο.'

'When everything was ready and they were on the point of sailing, there was an eclipse of the moon, which was at the full. Most of the Athenians took this event so seriously that they now urged the generals to wait, and Nicias, who was rather over-inclined to divination and such things, said that, until they had waited for the thrice nine days recommended by the soothsayers, he would not even join in any further discussion on how the move could be made. So the Athenians, delayed by the eclipse, stayed on afterwards.'³⁵

The events of the Sicilian expedition of 413 B.C. resulted in a catastrophic defeat for the Athenians. Arguably the main contributing factor to this disastrous loss was the decision made by Nicias to postpone moving the Athenian force to safety, in response to the lunar eclipse.³⁶ This decision was made on the basis of an interpretation of the lunar eclipse made by the independent diviners present, who had been employed to accompany the military expedition in order to provide divinatory guidance.³⁷

Divination was a fundamental aspect of the decision making process in ancient Greece. Prophecies, omens and dreams were an accepted element of everyday life and as such needed to be interpreted immediately. In many instances, the meaning of a portent could be deduced by those present without too much consideration; yet depending upon the weight of a decision, a need for reassurance often accompanied it, especially if there was still some doubt as to the correct course of action. In addition, if an enquiry needed to be made of the gods, independent diviners were required to provide a link between immortals and men, both to initiate and to interpret divine communication.

³⁵ Thuc. VII:50, tr. Warner.

³⁶ See chapter III 83-85 for the seers in Nicias' employment, more notably Stilbides. See also, Powell (1979) 15-31.

³⁷ For a discussion of the eclipse, see chapter V 175-176. See also Stephenson and Fatoohi (2001) 245-253.

Pleasing the gods was of the utmost importance and the prominence of sanctuaries, festivals and religious rites within Greek city states demonstrates this clearly.³⁸ The excerpt above from Thucydides describes the clear omen of the eclipse, and this was recognised by all to have been an inauspicious sign from the gods and as such could not have been overlooked. Thucydides informs us that not only Nicias, but the entire Athenian army clamoured to remain encamped until it was deemed propitious to do otherwise.³⁹

The interpretations made by independent diviners as a result of communicating with the gods via divination had an immense impact upon the course of ancient Greek history. Divination survived in one form or another for centuries, and it only seemed to diminish under the monarchies of the hellenistic period, but even then, certain divinatory practices endured throughout this time.⁴⁰ Consequently, for divination to prevail for such a long duration, the ancient Greeks must have found some satisfaction in using it as part of their decision making process, in order for them to have continued practising these methods.⁴¹

Therefore, it is important to understand that divination must have alleviated the pressure of making life-changing decisions to a certain extent, especially in those instances where the decisions impacted upon entire armies or city states. In their role as the interpreters of the gods' will, independent diviners would have had some share in the responsibility of the decision, along with the enquirer, as the subsequent sequence of events would have occurred as a result of the decision in question, which in turn was made on the basis of the results of a divinatory enquiry. Subsequently, independent diviners and even the gods themselves could be considered culpable, and this shared responsibility must have lessened the pressure felt by those charged with making an important decision.⁴²

³⁸ See introduction 2.n.1. for suggested general reading in ancient Greek religion.

³⁹ Thuc. VII:50, see also n.2.

⁴⁰ Consider the long duration of success operation at the oracular centres in ancient Greece, Olympia and Delphi in particular. For more on this, see Parke (1972) for Delphi and (1967) for Olympia. For a treatment of the decline of independent diviners, see Bremmer (1996) 106-109; Flower (2008b) 126-131, see also chapter V 176 and the conclusion of this thesis 205.

⁴¹ See Meyer (2002) for a thorough treatment of the impact of divination on ancient decision making.

⁴² See Bowden (2003) 3. 'Divination would make some difficult decisions easier by reframing the issues at stake, and give the appearance of external authority for those decisions, making it easier to reconcile members of the society to them.' See also Parker (2000) 78.

As divination played such a pivotal role in decision making, its significance should not be overlooked when scrutinising events from Greek myth and history. As we shall see, it is evident in the sources that the majority of the ancient Greeks were very pious and that for the most part, they followed the expected ritual practices of divinatory consultations absolutely, and this was due to their belief in the reality of their religious system.⁴³

A clear idea of the importance of independent diviners to both the decision making process and the subsequent events which unfolded as a result of their interpretations is already beginning to emerge. The aim of chapter I is to explore the various types of religious specialist that we encounter in the literature and to examine in greater detail what constitutes an independent diviner, so that we might better understand their position and purpose in the ancient Greek world.

⁴³ I say this, as it would be naïve to presume that every single ancient Greek was devout and that no one ever circumnavigated the process of consulting the gods, as we have instances preserved of individuals doing so, and pious ones at that. Consider how Xenophon consulted the Delphic Oracle before embarking on the expedition with Cyrus the Younger (*Xen. Anab.* III:1.6-8). He was scolded by Socrates for not formulating his question in the expected manner, so that he could obtain the response that he desired. See chapter V 172-173 for further discussion of this particular instance. See also, Parke (1972) 113-114. For a discussion on the influence of the gods in decision making in democratic Athens, see Bowden (2005) 1.

Chapter I

What is an Independent Diviner?

i). Definition:

The term ‘independent diviner’ was coined by Dillery in his 2005 article to distinguish between the assortment of ancient Greek religious specialists which we are presented with in the ancient sources, particularly those associated with divination.⁴⁴ He introduced this term in order to treat the ‘independent’ religious specialists of the ancient Greek world under one heading.

According to Dillery, there are two types of diviner who fall into this category, known as χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις, as for the most part they were not associated with a particular deity or cult centre.⁴⁵ He also distinguishes these two religious specialists from others by their skill set, which he considers to be discernible by its lack of divine inspiration, apart from where the μάντεις of myth were concerned.⁴⁶ In this article he treats both χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις as separate and individual roles, under the general heading of independent diviners.

Following on from his work, in this thesis I will be treating χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις as synonymous under the designation of independent diviners, but there will be occasions when I will be exploring the roles individually, as and when a distinction between them is necessary. I agree with Dillery’s classification of χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις as independent diviners, and consider the similarities and differences between the roles to merit further examination, alongside other ‘dependent’ religious specialists of the classical period, who will be treated later in this chapter.

This chapter also aims to establish the purpose of independent diviners in the ancient Greek world and to explore written oracular collections, as these were frequently consulted,

⁴⁴ Dillery (2005) 168-171.

⁴⁵ The clear exception to this being the long established positions of members of the Iamidae and Clytiadae mantic families at Olympia. See Weniger (1915) 53-115 for a list of seers employed at Olympia.

⁴⁶ Dillery (2005) 171-172. See also, Nock (1972) 539.

especially in the absence of a consultation at an oracular centre, with the hope of understanding a particular procedure or state of affairs. Independent diviners were often required either to consult the collection on behalf of the enquirer, or to help provide an interpretation of the divine message.

Before delving any further into the realm of independent diviners, it is necessary to examine an important ancient Greek word: Μαντική. Plato accredits the origins of μαντική to an original association with the word mania and states that the ‘τ’ was a later insertion.⁴⁷ This natural association with mania and madness is often concomitant with direct divine influence and prophecy. Hence the word μαντική is often understood to mean prophecy. When I use the term μαντική in this work I am referring both to the gift of prophecy itself and also to all other divinatory skills attributed to χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες in the classical period.⁴⁸

ii). Types of Independent Diviner:

When investigating independent diviners in the Greek city state it is essential to consider all aspects of the role, from their origins and the evolution of their social standing, to the transition in their methods of divining and their reception within the city state. In order to do this we must first consider the various types of independent diviner which we encounter in the sources.

ii.a). μάντιες:

The noun to describe a Greek seer which is used most frequently in the sources is the word μάντις (pl. μάντιες) and this noun is used to describe independent diviners from myth through to the end of the classical period and beyond.⁴⁹ The ancient sources often record the lineage of μάντιες, and this seems to have contributed to each individual’s renown as an expert

⁴⁷ Plat. *Phaed.* 244c. See Ballériaux 35-43 and Flower (2008b) 84.

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion of the divinatory practices utilised by independent diviners, see chapter IV 110-163.

⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion on the etymology of the word μάντις, see Roth (1982) 9-29.

in divination.⁵⁰ Additionally, certain regions of Greece appear to have produced more μάντεις than others; Elean and Arcadian μάντεις especially appear in employment in city states other than their own.⁵¹

The main forms of divination practised by a μάντις were ornithomancy (divination by observing the flights of birds), cledonomancy (interpreting unusual occurrences), onieromancy (divination by dreams) and extispicy (reading animal entrails). It was most certainly necessary for a μάντις to be able to read any unexpected omen which might occur along the way, and this, in turn, meant that a μάντις needed to possess a wealth of knowledge in possible interpretations.⁵² There were also instances of μάντεις making the occasional inspired divine pronouncement, although this seems to be a more frequent occurrence for μάντεις of myth rather than their historical descendants.⁵³

ii.b). χρησμολόγοι:

Another type of independent diviner is a χρησμολόγος, pl. χρησμολόγοι. Unlike μάντεις, the earliest appearance of this term is in the work of the fifth century B.C. historian Herodotus and the role does not appear to have required the same emphasis on ancestry when it came to reputation and gaining employment. If this was the case, then Herodotus would have surely mentioned it, as he does with μάντεις.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ See chapter II 56-57 for the importance of ancestry and mantic families.

⁵¹ See Hdt. IX:33; Kett (1966) 71-73 and Roth (1982) 286 for Teisamenos and Hdt. IX:41; Kett (1966) 42-43 and Roth (1982) 276-77 for Hegesistratos as examples of manteis from Elis. See also, Xen. *Anab.* VI:4.13, VI:5.2, VI:5.8 for Arexion the Arcadian and Kett (1966) 24-25 and Roth (1982) 270. For a full list of Arcadian and Elean seers, see Kett (1966) 17-80 and Roth (1982) 268-287.

⁵² For a more detailed exploration of the types of divination practised by independent diviners, see chapter IV 110-163.

⁵³ See chapter III for the evolution of the role between myth and the classical period and chapter IV 135-136 for a treatment of inspired divination. See also, Dillery (2005) 171-2 for a brief discussion of this and Nissinen (2010) 341-351 for the distinction between μανία and τέχνη in divination.

⁵⁴ See Hdt. VII:6 for Onomakritos, who worked in Athens in the service of the Peisistratids. Consider Herodotus crediting Melampus with the introduction of the cult of Dionysus to Greece (Hdt. II:49). Herodotus made a point of mentioning noteworthy facts about individuals and if one of the χρησμολόγοι which he mentions was considered to have been the first, he would certainly have made a point of emphasising it. The focus on ancestry is demonstrated further in other parts of his work where he details the ancestry of individual μάντεις. See chapter II 56-57 for a treatment of ancestry.

A χρησμολόγος (a singer or speaker of oracles), is considered to have been by definition an individual who recited oracles from an oracular collection accredited to a famous seer from myth, whose role was to use his oracular collection to guide the enquirer towards a particular ritual or course of action when faced with an important decision.⁵⁵ Whereas a μάντις was considered to have been an individual who read natural signs and interpreted messages from the gods for the enquirer to the same end.

The similarities between the religious practices of these χρησμολόγοι when compared to μάντιες and the confusion in the sources where some individuals are referred to as both a μάντις and a χρησμολόγος in ancient sources, has sparked heated debate amongst modern scholars as to whether these roles were even truly distinct from one another.⁵⁶

iii). Defining the two roles: the χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες debate:

Dillery's article contributes to a debate which has surfaced repeatedly for over fifty years concerning how these religious specialists should be categorised and treated. The work of Oliver in the 1950s on the 'expounders' of sacred law in Athens intended to clarify the role of these professionals within the city state, although he treats χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες as two different names for the same type of religious specialist. He calls this amalgamated role the 'chresmologoi-kai-manteis'.⁵⁷ His book does not seem to have been particularly well received at the time.⁵⁸

A small article by Argyle contributes to the debate by acknowledging that he believed there to be a definite distinction between χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες, as indicated in the Aristophanes and Thucydides excerpts which we are about to examine. However, Argyle does admit that at present the true distinction between the roles is still somewhat of a mystery to

⁵⁵ See Oliver (1952a) 6-11 for his view on the etymology of χρησμολόγος.

⁵⁶ See Oliver (1950) 6-11; Argyle (1970); Smith (1989) 142 n.6; Baumgarten (1998) 57; Olsen (1998) 269; Bowden (2003) 263-64, Dillery (2005) 170-171 and Flower (2008b) 61; to name but a few.

⁵⁷ Oliver (1952a) 11-17, (1952b) 410 and 411.

⁵⁸ Oliver published an article (1952b) later that year defending his work in response to rather negative reviews.

us, but he is adamant that there was a distinction, and that our sources were most certainly aware of it.⁵⁹

More recently, Bowden has summarised the distinction between χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες as follows:

‘in the broad sense of the word, all χρησμολόγοι are μάντιες; in a narrower sense μάντιες are responsible for observing the entrails of sacrificial victims and the flight of birds, while χρησμολόγοι are concerned with spoken or written texts, but neither is an official designation.’⁶⁰

The difficulties with defining each role precisely are still evident and these issues are also recognised in the work of Dillery.⁶¹ Flower also follows this train of thought and considers χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες to have a similar type of role, but not the same.

This debate has arisen chiefly because certain passages in sources from the classical period categorise individual independent diviners as either χρησμολόγοι or μάντιες, and even other types of religious specialist on occasion.⁶² The difficulty with this is that these categorisations are inconsistent across the ancient sources, therefore the result is that some independent diviners are classified as both χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες, depending upon which author you are reading.

This erratic grouping of independent diviners inspired scholars to try to define each role clearly and to allocate each religious specialist noted in the ancient sources into one category or the other (i.e. χρησμολόγος or μάντις), which is a rather problematic task, due to the variety of accounts which we have describing certain individuals and the fact that the ways in which they practised their τέχνη cross over in the ancient sources. As a result, we often have

⁵⁹ Argyle (1970) 139.

⁶⁰ Bowden (2003) 263-64.

⁶¹ Dillery (2005) 171.

⁶² The independent diviner Lampon, for example, has been referred to as a χρησμολόγος, μάντις, exergete and oikist. For further source information on Lampon see Kett (1966) 54-57 and Roth (1982) 278. See Ehrenberg (1948) 164; Malkin (1987) 98-99 and Garland (1990) 82 for debates about what they consider Lampon’s primary role to have been in Athens.

individuals whom one might consider to be a χρησμολόγος performing the role of a μάντις, or vice versa.⁶³

The description of the independent diviner Hierocles in Aristophanes' *Peace* has caused much confusion amongst scholars. It is frequently cited in the debate to draw a distinction between χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες. Trygaeus is preparing to offer a sacrifice when his slave observes someone approaching crowned with laurel. The slave asks: 'μάντις τίς ἐστιν;' and Trygaeus responds: 'οὐ μὰ Δί' ἀλλ' Ἱεροκλῆς, οὗτός γέ πού 'σθ' ὁ χρησμολόγος οὐξ Ὠρεοῦ.'⁶⁴ The fact that Trygaeus refuses to acknowledge Hierocles as a μάντις and insists that he is instead a χρησμολόγος has led to the assumption that there must have been a clear distinction between the roles in the ancient world that we are yet to understand fully, or else Aristophanes would not have made a point of emphasising it.

In this passage Hierocles approaches them in the garb of a μάντις, at a time when a μάντις was required to oversee the sacrifice, and although it is evident that he is not welcome, Hierocles attempts to participate. Trygaeus appears to be of the opinion that Hierocles has neither the right, nor the expertise to conduct the sacrifice properly and so, after they argue and Hierocles spouts oracles at Trygaeus concerning both the sacrifice and the Peace, he is eventually ejected from the sacrifice and forced to leave.

What is evident from this passage is that it seems that what Trygaeus wanted was a μάντις and he met a χρησμολόγος instead. The implication here is that a χρησμολόγος was not only the wrong kind of specialist, but also an unwelcome one. This passage, combined with the Thucydides excerpt below, presents the idea that a χρησμολόγος was a rather undesirable character, but if we look at what we know of Hierocles and for the moment at least consider him to be a χρησμολόγος, as designated by Aristophanes, a different picture begins to emerge.⁶⁵

⁶³ Such as Amphilytos or Hierocles. For a discussion of Amphilytos, see chapter II 50-52, for the role of Hierocles in Athens, see chapter III 92-93.

⁶⁴ Slave: 'Is he a diviner?' Trygaeus: 'No, by Zeus; he's Hierocles, surely, the oracle-monger from Oreus.' Aristoph. *Peace* 1045-50 tr. Sommerstein.

⁶⁵ See Kett (1966) 50-51 and Roth (1982) 277 for sources on Hierocles.

Hierocles is mentioned in the Chalcis Decree, where it appears he was instructed to consult the oracles concerning Euboea.⁶⁶ The implication from this inscription is that Hierocles was some form of a religious specialist and the fact that he was asked to consult an oracular collection indicates that he was perhaps a χρησμολόγος (if we use the definition provided above). However, the fact that he was involved in the foundation of the colony at Oreus implies that he may well be a μάντις instead (if we are following these same definitions). From this we can see that the difficulties with officially designating independent diviners into one category or another are preventing a concrete definition of each role.

Flower follows the opinion of Bowden here; that it is more likely that Aristophanes is calling Hierocles a χρησμολόγος in order to mock him, as it seems that this role did not hold the same prestige as that of a μάντις. This is an opinion which I am also inclined to agree with, as we encounter far more μάντιες than χρησμολόγοι in the ancient sources and this might be because χρησμολόγοι were not consulted or employed in the same way within city states as μάντιες were, but this is merely speculation at this point.⁶⁷

It seems that whenever the terms χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες appear together in an ancient source, there is a discussion as to what the distinction between the two roles might have been. A particular passage in Thucydides is also used frequently in this debate, as it describes the reaction of the Athenians to the failure of the Sicilian Expedition:

‘...ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἔγνωσαν, χαλεποὶ μὲν ἦσαν τοῖς ξυμπροθυμηθεῖσι τῶν ῥητόρων τὸν ἔκπλουν, ὥσπερ οὐκ αὐτοὶ ψηφισάμενοι, ὠργίζοντο δὲ καὶ τοῖς χρησμολόγοις τε καὶ μάντεσι καὶ ὀπόσοι τι τότε αὐτοὺς θειάσαντες ἐπήλιπσαν ὡς λήγονται Σικελίαν.’

‘...And when they did recognize the facts, they turned against the public speakers who had been in favour of the expedition, as though they themselves had not voted for it, and also became angry with the prophets and soothsayers and all who at the time had, by various methods of divination, encouraged them to believe that they would conquer Sicily.’⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See Bowden (2003) 266 and Flower (2008) 63 for mention of this decree, see also chapter III 99.

⁶⁷ See Bowden (2003) 266-267 and Flower (2008) 61-63.

⁶⁸ Thuc. VIII:1.1., tr. Warner.

In his commentary on Thucydides Hornblower writes that in this ‘heavily rhetorical’ chapter Thucydides is using a rhetorical device. Where he says: ‘they (the Athenians) were also furious with the oracle-collectors, and the seers, and all who by divination had made them believe they would conquer Sicily.’ What he means by this is that the ‘climactic third member’ as Hornblower describes it, who is mentioned in this passage i.e. ‘all who by divination’ forces the passage to be considered differently and reduces the need to interpret a stark difference between χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες.⁶⁹ If what Hornblower has inferred is correct, then Thucydides was merely emphasising the anger of the Athenians at all religious specialists in divination rather than at those two types alone.

In my opinion χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες are different specialists which make up one entity (i.e. an independent diviner), with varying areas of specialisation upon closer scrutiny. I agree with Hornblower and Bowden in that it seems that the terms χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες are used to describe variations of both roles depending upon the author; they have definitely become conflated through time and associated together more closely and this is what has caused confusion and debate.

When it comes to the use of these two nouns in the ancient sources, it is clear that μάντις is the more recognised and popular term for an independent diviner, especially as χρησμολόγοι do not appear on record until Herodotus. This does not necessarily imply that he created the term, it could well be that earlier authors disliked using it because of its sometimes negative association. However, as we only come across χρησμολόγοι for the first time in the late sixth century B.C., this prompts the question of when this role first came into existence.

It was clearly firmly established by the time Herodotus, Thucydides and Aristophanes were writing in the fifth century B.C. as they all mention χρησμολόγοι in their works and felt no need to provide a definition. This implies that χρησμολόγοι were well-known religious specialists by this period at the very latest.

⁶⁹ See Bowden (2003) 271; Dillery (2005) 167-231 and Hornblower (2008) 750-75 for interpretations of this passage.

An example of one of the earliest known χρησμολόγοι is Amphilytos, who accompanied Peisistratos into the battle of Pallene, where he successfully routed the Athenians and installed himself as a tyrant. Amphilytos does not behave like a typical χρησμολόγος in this passage, as he produces a spontaneous prophecy on the battlefield.⁷⁰ Another χρησμολόγος is Onomacritos, who according to Herodotus worked at the court of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos and later for his sons Hippias and Hipparchos before he was exiled, where he was then employed at the court of the Persian king Darius.⁷¹

Herodotus also introduces us to Lasos of Hermione, who according to Herodotus was responsible for Onomacritos' exile from Athens.⁷² Onomacritos and Lasos were practising their τέχνη in the late stages of the sixth century and early fifth century B.C., but it is unlikely that they were the first χρησμολόγοι, as surely if this was the case then Herodotus would have made a point of introducing them in this way, as the aim of his inquiry was to highlight notable facts of interest in each area of his work.

There is without doubt (in the fifth century B.C. at least) a distinction of sorts between the two roles when scrutinised carefully. A μάντις was 'the Greek seer', evolved from the seers of Homeric epic who (at least by the classical period) used extispicy and ornithomancy among other methods to interpret the will of the gods. Their knowledge was passed down between families from parent to child or teacher to apprentice and they maintained strong traditions to help to maintain the mystery and exclusive nature of their position.⁷³

A χρησμολόγος, in contrast, was an individual who acquired an oracular collection and who claimed that these oracular tablets were part of an oracular collection preserved from a seer from myth e.g. Musaeus or Sybil. The χρησμολόγος would then familiarise himself with

⁷⁰ Hdt. I:62. See Kett (1966) 21-22 and Roth (1982) 289. This is another instance which causes difficulty when attempting to define the two roles.

⁷¹ For Onomacritos, see also Kett (1966) 61-63 and Roth (1982) 291-292.

⁷² Hdt. VII:6. See Shapiro (1990) 335-345. It seems that neither Kett nor Roth included Lasos in their respective prosopographies, but this could well be due to his main career as a poet; he was said to have been Pindar's teacher. See Shapiro (1990) 340-341n.14.

⁷³ For more on this, see chapter II 56-57.

his oracular collection and then use an opportunistic and creative nature to peddle whichever oracle from his collection had the most relevance to the current crisis.

iv). Other religious officials in the classical period:

Priests were religious officials who were allocated to oracular centres and temples. Their responsibilities were typically administrative, they were required to ensure the smooth operation of the religious institution and they were also able to assist in the performance of specific rites and sacrifices as required.⁷⁴ As the different types of priest that we come across in the ancient sources are all allocated to oracular centres, they cannot be included under the heading of independent diviners.

Exegetes were religious specialists employed to read ancient writings and enact specific sacrifices and rituals as instructed in the literature. In Athens they were employed to read and interpret sacred law. It does not seem that their role required the practice of divination: therefore, they have not been included in this thesis in any more detail.⁷⁵

Prophetai were religious specialists who were allocated to a temple or an oracular centre and were often thought to be inhabited by a god. There are times when prophetes is used to describe μάντις, and this role is the closest to χρησμολόγοι and μάντις on account of its inspired element, but as they are allocated to religious institutions they are classed as 'dependent' diviners.⁷⁶

Engastrimuthoi, or belly-talkers, are rather mysterious diviners as they allegedly had *daimones* in their stomachs, which would communicate either through their stomachs or orally via their vessel. They have not been included in this thesis as there is so little evidence on them and there are not enough instances in the ancient sources to allow us to place them in a particular context within ancient Greek society at present.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ For further reading on priests, see Chaniotis (2008) 17-34. See also the introduction to this book, written by Henrichs 1-14.

⁷⁵ For further reading on exegetes, see Oliver (1952a).

⁷⁶ See Bremmer (1993) 159 and Dillery (2005) 171.

⁷⁷ See Aristoph. *Wasps* 1019-1020. See also Johnston (2008) 140.

v). Oracular collections:

Herodotus is the first source to inform us of the existence of written collections of oracles which were in circulation towards the end of the archaic period. These collections seem to have been used in two different ways. There were oracular collections which were utilised by χρησμολόγοι and to our understanding these were their main way of practising divination, and there were the oracular collections which were recorded and stored within city states for official consultation when required.⁷⁸ Fontenrose sees the function of these oracular collections to have been as follows:

‘The oracles in circulation were statements or commands relevant, or interpreted as relevant, to contemporary events and crises.’⁷⁹

This definition is quite accurate when you consider the oracles which were peddled by χρησμολόγοι in support of the expedition when the Athenians were contemplating invading Sicily.⁸⁰

Herodotus informs us of two oracular collections kept by individual χρησμολόγοι, the collection kept by Onomacritos credited to Musaeus, and that of Antichares of Eleon credited to Laius.⁸¹ These individual collections were often attributed to famous seers from myth, but it is unlikely that this was truly the case.⁸² Other notable names with oracular collections ascribed to them were Bakis and Orpheus.⁸³ These collections were consulted and utilised in any time of crisis, as seen above during the Peloponnesian war. As Sancisi-Weerdenburg observes:

⁷⁸ See Hdt. VII.6 for an individual collection and V:90 for a state one. See Stoneman (2011) 172-3 for a treatment of written collections of oracles.

⁷⁹ Fontenrose (1978) 152.

⁸⁰ Thuc. VIII:1.1. For an analysis of this passage, see above 24-25.

⁸¹ For Onomacritos, see Hdt. VII:6. For Antichares, see Hdt. V:43. See also Bowden (2003) 264-265.

⁸² According to Bowden, little is known of Laius, see (2003) 265.

⁸³ See Fontenrose (1978) 163 and Bowden (2003) 266 for a treatment of Bakis. For further discussion of Orpheus, see Shapiro (1990) 42.

‘A collection of oracles was something to be studied (and learned by heart) intensively’⁸⁴

That way if a city state or a certain individual was in some form of strife a χρησμολόγος would have been able to mentally select from their oracular collection and recite the most relevant oracle immediately in order to provide a solution. Evidently this would have made far more of an impression than rummaging through the physical collection in order to manually select the most suitable oracle. A memorised delivery would have been more convincing. This method of divining appears to have been successful, as χρησμολόγοι seem to have been firmly established for the fifth century B.C. at least.⁸⁵

The first state collection of oracles appears to have been instigated by Peisistratos and stored on the acropolis in Athens.⁸⁶ Fontenrose believes them to have been either a collection of oracles which were gathered from many sources (i.e. mythic seers) or a collection of written responses from Delphi and other oracular centres.⁸⁷ Personally I consider the latter to be more plausible, as this also follows the model of the oracular collection kept by the Spartans.⁸⁸ During the classical period the Athenian state oracles could be accessed for consultation and were often used in the law-courts to demonstrate when sacred and traditional laws had been breached.⁸⁹ Therefore a χρησμολόγος was not always required, depending upon the nature of the enquiry.

As we shall see in the next chapter, where χρησμολόγοι were concerned, there was no emphasis on ancestry because there was no need for it. The τέχνη of a χρησμολόγος was not believed to be inherent and the knowledge necessary to become a χρησμολόγος was hardly a secret. All a χρησμολόγος was required to do was to familiarise himself with his collection. It

⁸⁴ Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 74. See also 72-73 for a discussion on whether Onomacritos was reciting oracles or writing them down.

⁸⁵ For the decline of independent diviners, see chapter V 276 and 205 of the conclusion of this thesis.

⁸⁶ Hdt. V:90. See also Baumgarten (1998) 60-61 and Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 64.

⁸⁷ Fontenrose (1978) 164.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ See Garland (1990) 87-88 and Bremmer (1993) 156-157. See also Mikalson (1983) 48 for an assessment of the importance of divine signs in the proceedings of the Athenian law courts.

is likely that this distinction in mantic ability was why χρησμολόγοι were treated differently in the sources from μάντιες.

These differences appear to be the main areas of distinction between the two roles. Yet this does not mean that a χρησμολόγος could not be classed as a μάντις or vice versa. There is no reason why a μάντις could not consider an oracular collection when contemplating a suitable cause of action, especially if he was consulted in a situation located within a city state, where access to an oracular collection would have been far more feasible than in a remote situation such as whilst founding a colony or embroiled in a military campaign.

It seems clear that the place of a μάντις was not just on the battlefield; μάντιες were often involved in internal politics within a city state and we also have evidence of their involvement within the colonisation process. As μάντιες were ‘mobile’, a μάντις was required to oversee the necessary religious rites to ensure that it was propitious to proceed with the founding of the colony. From the fifth century B.C. we have Lampon and Hierocles as examples of such individuals.

vi). Distinctions:

For the purposes of this study I would like to be clear that when I am referring to an independent diviner or a seer, I am referring to both χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες. In short, as far as I am concerned they should be treated as individuals whose roles are synonymous at first glance, but it should also be recognised that in instances where closer scrutiny is necessary each individual might have a clear area of specialism which differs from the others, and this is where a clear distinction might be needed. In this thesis I will explore the representation of both χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες in the sources and how these contributed to the perception and understanding of independent diviners as religious specialists during the classical period.

Chapter II

History of Μάντεις and Χρησμολόγοι

In order to approach this subject successfully it seems sensible to treat μάντεις and χρησμολόγοι as separate entities in this chapter, as their origins are quite distinct from one another. I am certainly of the view that both roles should be considered together under the general heading of independent diviners, but with that in mind one cannot ignore that in some accounts from the fifth century B.C. especially there are instances where two separate roles are indicated, therefore in those particular circumstances and where the origins of each role is concerned they need to be explored as such.⁹⁰

i). Μάντεις:

When examining μάντεις in the Greek city state it is essential to consider the origins and evolution of the role. Μάντεις are firmly established in Greek mythology and they are mentioned frequently in both historical and literary sources. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are the earliest Greek texts to feature μάντεις, and seers such as Calchas played an important role in the decision making processes of our Greek heroes. What is apparent in these texts (the *Odyssey* especially) is that the ancestry of a μάντις was a fundamental part of their reputation.⁹¹

There is a long digression in Book XV of the *Odyssey* describing the lineage of the seer Theoclymenus of the Melampodidae.⁹² The purpose of this digression is to inform the reader of the famous seers that this μάντις has in his lineage, in order to add weight to his words when he finally speaks. This is because if a μάντις was able to prove affiliation with one of these mantic families, then it seems that he would automatically have been respected more than if he was of unknown stock. The main reason for this is that if the mantic skill was

⁹⁰ For more on this, see Chapter I of this work or Bowden (2003) 260-264.

⁹¹ See Johnston (2008) 110-116 for an informative introduction to ancestry and μάντεις.

⁹² Hom. *Od.* XV:223-264. See Levine (1983) 1-7 for the importance of Theoclymenus in the *Odyssey*. See Bremmer (1996) 98 for a contrary position. In this chapter the importance of Theoclymenus in the epic is not specifically under scrutiny. The fact that he is introduced here with a description of his lineage reveals the importance of ancestry when employing a μάντις.

considered in part to be hereditary and there was a successful history of predictions surrounding such mantic families, then this would promote the μάντις as a vessel for enquiry if he was able to attest his lineage. When searching for employment in fifth century B.C. Greece the ancestry of a μάντις could be his or her greatest asset. This prerequisite did not appear to change during the evolution of the role between the mythical and classical periods.⁹³

i.a). Becoming a μάντις:

From preserved accounts such as that in Homer of Theoclymenus and his ancestry, there is an implication that a μάντις was born into a mantic family and so acquired his skill in this way. From this we can propose two opposing theories, either the mantic art is a hereditary τέχνη and cannot be learned or taught in any way, or alternatively these families kept the knowledge of μαντική secret and only passed on their divine knowledge within their specialist group, thus nullifying competition and ensuring employment and renown for that particular family as mantic specialists within the field of divination.

Initially it seems prudent to consider the origins of the first μάντιες - those that sit at the top of the mantic family tree, as each individual obtained mantic abilities through a different encounter and this same experience was not replicated through the bloodline for the descendants of each founding μάντις. Hence the descendants of Iamus did not have μαντική bestowed upon them directly by Apollo.⁹⁴

In the origin stories of how one acquires mantic abilities, a common theme is saliva. In some instances, the μάντις was licked by an animal, usually a snake, and from that moment he or she was able to understand the chatter of birds and animals and foretell the future. Cassandra, Helenus and Melampus all had their ears licked by snakes and this theme recurs in Greek myth in close association with certain μάντιες.⁹⁵ Polyidus observed one snake bringing another back from the dead and from this was then able to revive Glaukos, the son

⁹³ Flower (2008b) 37-50 is also of this opinion.

⁹⁴ See Stern (1970) for further reading on the presentation of Iamus in Pind. *O.* VI.

⁹⁵ Apollod. *Lib.* I:9.11 n.2, tr. Frazer. See also, Johnston (2008) 111 for a brief treatment of saliva and μαντική.

of king Minos. From this account we also learn that returning saliva could remove mantic abilities, as was the case for Glaukos after he was taught the art of divination by Polyidus. Polyidus asked Glaukos to spit in his mouth as he was sailing away and as a result the boy could no longer remember how to practise divination.⁹⁶

There is also an account in Maurus Servius Honoratus' commentary on Vergil's Aeneid in which he describes Apollo spitting into Cassandra's mouth to prevent anyone from believing her prophecies, which was her punishment for refusing to be his concubine.⁹⁷ The link between the exchange of saliva and the art of divination and prophecy is evident. Perhaps this association began because saliva is used to utter speech, therefore it is an integral part of making pronouncements. The saliva itself might have been considered to possess mantic ability in some form in order for the speaker to utter words of prophetic effect, as the speaker was considered to have been inspired as a whole by some divine element. Certainly, the divine aspect of acquiring μαντική should not be overlooked in this process.

Divine intervention usually had some hand in the process, as often μάντεις had the art of μαντική bestowed upon them directly by a deity. In Pindar's *Olympian VI* the description of how Iamus gained his mantic abilities can be misleading, as it describes more than one possible catalyst for Iamus' acquisition of his abilities. Initially we are told that he is the son of Apollo;⁹⁸ if the mantic art is hereditary, as is often implied, then this fact alone should guarantee his abilities.

Yet, in addition to this, Pindar narrates that as an infant Iamus was nurtured by honey dropped upon his lips by bees.⁹⁹ This action is considered by Hesiod to be a gift bestowed by the Muses. Pausanias tells us that Pindar himself is said to have had wax from bees dropped upon his lips and we know from Hesiod's *Theogony* that this facilitates an extraordinary talent

⁹⁶ Apollod. *Lib.* III:3.1-2. See Suárez (2009b) 663-4 for an assessment of the many talents of Polyidus.

⁹⁷ Serv. II:247.

⁹⁸ Pind. *O.* VI:50. Stern (1970) 337-339.

⁹⁹ Pind. *O.* VI:45-7. See also Cook (1895) 1-24.

with words.¹⁰⁰ What is prominent above all else in this account is that finally Apollo called to Iamus and bestowed the power of prophecy upon him directly.

The clear conclusion from this passage is that being the son of Apollo and receiving the blessing from bees were insufficient gifts alone to guarantee mantic abilities for Iamus. Apollo had to convey the τέχνη directly to him so that he could foretell the future; it does not seem that μαντική would have developed from the other two instances alone.¹⁰¹

In contrast to the tale of Iamus' mantic acquisition, the account of how Melampus obtained his τέχνη is noticeably lacking in direct divine intervention. As previously highlighted, Melampus is one of our instances of a μάντις acquiring his ability through saliva. His ears were licked by snakes after he raised them from infancy, and from that moment he was able to understand the language of birds and foretell the future. The absence of a deity from this story highlights the lack of consistency in these origin accounts of founding μάντις acquiring their abilities.¹⁰² As for Tellias of the Telliadae and Clytius of the Clytiadae, there is so little preserved about these founding μάντις that at present there is no surviving account of how they acquired their abilities.

In the case of some μάντις there were occurrences where individuals gained the art of prophecy in exchange for another of their senses. Apollo bestowed μαντική upon Euenius after he was blinded by his townspeople for fulfilling the will of the gods.¹⁰³ The Thracian king Phineus was given the art of prophecy from Apollo, but was then blinded by Zeus for giving mankind prophecies that were too clear.¹⁰⁴ Also, we are told in Apollodorus that the seer Teiresias lost his eyesight either as a punishment for seeing the goddess Athena naked or as punishment for offending Hera when asked to settle a dispute between Hera and Zeus.

¹⁰⁰ Paus. IX:23.2; Hesiod *Theog.* 81-7. For seers and poets receiving divine inspiration see Dietrich (1990) 158.

¹⁰¹ Pind. *O.* VI:44-70. See also, Flower (2008a).

¹⁰² Apollod. *Lib.* I:9.12 - although of course one could argue that there was an unmentioned divine influence that led to the snakes appearing in the seer's life, but that depends entirely upon one's view of ancient Greek fate and the role of the ancient Greek gods in such things.

¹⁰³ Hdt. IX:94.3. How and Wells (1928) II:328 suggest that Euenius was an inspired seer like Calchas or Iamus, rather than a 'learned interpreter'. See also Kett (1966) 38-39 and Roth (1982) 276. For further reading, see Grottanelli (2003) 203-218.

¹⁰⁴ Apollon. II:178-239.

In both instances Teiresias received the mantic art through pity. Athena cleansed his ears so that he could understand bird song, and Zeus gave him the art of prophecy in compensation for his blinding by Hera.¹⁰⁵ It does appear that in these particular instances there is an element of sacrifice on the part of these μάντεις when it comes to acquiring their abilities.

For both Euenius and Teiresias, they only had mantic abilities presented to them after they had been blinded against their will. Whereas Phineus had his sight taken away for seeing too much. It seems that in many instances μάντεις lost their eyesight so that they could then see what others cannot (i.e. what would come to pass), although this is a completely different exchange to what we have seen with saliva, as in this instance we do not have an example of the process being reversed and the μάντις receiving his eyesight back.¹⁰⁶

Another noteworthy feature of these accounts is that these myths are also examples of seers receiving the art of μαντική from deities directly, and it is perhaps more noteworthy that these instances demonstrate that other Olympian gods were capable of bestowing the art of μαντική upon individuals, not just Apollo. The only aspect of the origins of μαντική for seers of myth that is clear is that the process of acquiring mantic abilities is conspicuously unclear. It seems that there was no definitive procedure which enabled someone to acquire μαντική and although we are fortunate to have origin myths preserved where the bestowal of μαντική is concerned, the variations between each account make it impossible to compile any form of a procedure to clarify the exact origins of this process.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Apollod. *Lib.* III:6.6-7. See also Call. *Hymn V*:121-6 and Apollon. II:178-93 for other seers having their eyesight removed by the gods. For a discussion on Teiresias' acquisition of his abilities see Krappe (1928) 267-268. See also, García Gual (1965) 107-131 and Ugolini (1991) 9-36 for further reading on the presentation and social standing of Teiresias in Greek myth and tragedy.

¹⁰⁶ Phineas may have lost his eyesight because for these seers a combination of eyesight and inspired divination meant that their view of the gods' will was too clear. I am in agreement with Johnston (2008) 112, who is content to acknowledge that the causes and reasons for blindness vary significantly throughout Greek myth.

¹⁰⁷ Johnston (2008) 112-113 also acknowledges that the causes and reasons for acquiring mantic ability vary throughout antiquity.

i.b). Acquiring mantic abilities:

The next aspect of the acquisition of μαντική needing investigation is the transference of mantic abilities between one seer and another within a particular mantic family. The indication from the ancient sources is that μαντική was considered to be an inherent skill which was kept within the family and was passed on from parent to child, and the accounts that we have detailing the ancestry of μάντιες confirm this.¹⁰⁸

How that information was passed on precisely remains somewhat of a mystery, but it seems most likely that the τέχνη was learned, but that perhaps natural aptitude had a part to play in this process. There was definitely a benefit for a μάντις if he was able to prove kinship with a mantic family, as it seems that learning the ability from a ‘parent’ μάντις was the best way to acquire the art. If a μάντις could learn the τέχνη from a renowned mantic family, then he or she would have a significant advantage over rival μάντιες.

Additionally, one would hope that they actually possessed greater abilities in interpretation, either from their specialist training or from some sort of innate talent, thus making them better qualified than the average individual to assist when consulted.¹⁰⁹

Despite the implication that μαντική was kept within families to ensure that it remained a specialist field, there are instances of other individuals gaining knowledge of the mantic art and in some cases possessing the ability to practise as a μάντις if the occasion demanded it. What has been noted from the sources is that there were individuals who were not classed as μάντιες, who acquired basic knowledge of μαντική through experience or learning of some kind.¹¹⁰ These individuals did not necessarily gain knowledge of the art so that they could become practising μάντιες.

¹⁰⁸ See Johnston (2008) 110-116 for an informative overview of this.

¹⁰⁹ See Flower (2008b) 37-57 for an exploration of mantic families and other requirements for becoming a seer.

¹¹⁰ Hippias, Xenophon and Thrasyllus are notable examples of these individuals. For Hippias see Hdt. VI:107. and chapter IV 129-130; for Xenophon see Xen. *Anab.* V:6.2; for Thrasyllus see Isoc. XIX.5; Kett (1966) 49 and Roth (1982) 286 and the discussion below.

Xenophon himself suggests that a good general should always be able to read the entrails either to monitor a μάντις or in order to function in the absence of one.¹¹¹ This instantly forces the observation that if the mantic art was this accessible, then it is curious that there should have been a requirement for mantic families or even μάντιες themselves at all.

However, if a μάντις could claim lineage to a prestigious family of μάντιες, then he would be able to argue a strong innate talent and specialist training within the mantic family that would not have been available to others. This immediately propelled the specialist μάντις into prominence and enforced the concept that for important aspects of divination a true expert was required. This passage of Xenophon also implies that there was a need to scrutinize the interpretation or perhaps the intentions of a μάντις.

In contrast to usual practice, there is an instance in Isocrates where an individual called Thrasyllus inherited a book of divination from the seer Polemaenetus.¹¹² In this account Thrasyllus received no direct training from Polemaenetus; he learned everything that he needed to about the mantic art through Polemaenetus' book on divination.¹¹³ That such books existed has been confirmed, but unfortunately none have been preserved.¹¹⁴

This account from Isocrates enforces the concept that μαντική itself was not hereditary as a skill. Clearly by the classical period at least the only way that is mentioned in the sources to acquire the mantic art was to learn it, whether this was through the observation of a practising μάντις in the field, or by reading a book on the subject. The implication is clear - the art of μαντική was learned, not innate; the only hereditary link by the classical period was that knowledge of μαντική was often retained within certain renowned families.

Even on Mount Olympus it was understood that the mantic art could be taught. In the *Hymn to Hermes* we are told that Apollo learned the art of prophecy from Zeus, the fact that he was Zeus' son was not sufficient for Apollo to have the ability inherently even as a deity.

¹¹¹ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29.

¹¹² Isoc. XIX.5. See also, Kett (1966) 66-67 and Roth (1982) 282 for Polemaenetus, and Kett (1966) 49 and Roth (1982) 286 for Thrasyllus.

¹¹³ Isoc. XIX:5-6.

¹¹⁴ For more on books on divination see Pritchett (1979a) 73; Flower (2008b) 52-53.

The same also applies to Hermes, as he wished to learn the art of prophecy but was not permitted to by Apollo and Zeus; instead he had to settle for reading omens and honey divination by bees as an alternative.¹¹⁵ The contrasting accounts of the blinding of Teiresias also suggest that Athena was able to bestow μαντική, although exactly how she acquired this skill in the first place is somewhat of a mystery.¹¹⁶

As it seems clear that there was no definitive process by which an individual received μαντική that can be discerned from the sources, we are forced to recognise that the ancient Greeks were content to acknowledge that there was no clear method of bestowing mantic ability and that they appear to have accepted all of the various means recounted in myth as sufficient. It was the ancestry of a μάντις that was of more interest to a potential employer, rather than the means of their acquisition of mantic abilities.

With regards to keeping μαντική within specific families, it is doubtful that each individual was a direct descendant of all those that they mention in their lineage. That said, this does not necessarily confirm that there were no instances of the mantic art being passed down from father to son.¹¹⁷ It is likely that the passing down of the mantic art from parent to child was the most preferable practice, although undoubtedly this was not always possible and so surely it was better to protect the lineage and reputation of the mantic family by initiating someone else into the family rather than to allow the bloodline to perish.

There were occurrences in the ancient world of select professions keeping their τέχνη within families and there is no reason to suppose that the profession of μάντις was any different.¹¹⁸ Clearly a seer would have been considered more credible if he could prove himself to be the son of a famous μάντις and the Greek emphasis on ancestry corroborates this.¹¹⁹

There is an unusual instance found in Herodotus describing the seer Deiphonus, who was thought to have been the son of the famous μάντις Euenius, yet Herodotus admits that he

¹¹⁵ HH. IV: 470-2; 534 and 556. See also Cook (1895) 1-24.

¹¹⁶ Krappe (1928) 268.

¹¹⁷ Consider Megistias and his son during the battle of Thermopylae. Hdt. VII:221.

¹¹⁸ Consider the Athenian families of the Eumolpidae and Kerykes, who were the hereditary priests of the Eleusinian Mysteries. See Burkert (1985a) 285 for further reading on this.

¹¹⁹ See Johnston (2008) 110-111.

had also heard that this claim was false.¹²⁰ In this account Herodotus demonstrates that although there were often these claims of lineage made by μάντις, they were not necessarily always believed to be true. Certainly, as highlighted previously it seems unlikely that all members of the Iamidae, for instance, were direct descendants of Iamus. Whether Iamus himself even existed is debatable. Despite this observation, this likelihood does not confirm that no μάντις was related by blood to another at all.

What can be confirmed is that the ancient Greeks were content to accept a seer who could trace their ancestry to a renowned mantic family: there did not necessarily have to be an understanding that the μάντις was a blood descendant, but certainly he or she would have been better received if this could have been verified in some way. For the most part, the μάντις was accepted either way, and this demonstrates that the mantic art was not purely inherited nor kept entirely within families, yet an established bloodline was useful in the fact that it proved an inherent ability which had already been confirmed through famous ancestry to be superior.

It is worth noting here that there is a clear emphasis on the lineage of Theoclymenus in the *Odyssey*, but there is no reference to the lineage of seers in the *Iliad*.¹²¹ It seems that although it is clear that this concept evolved from epic, it is highly likely that the lineage of Theoclymenus was a later edition to the oral tradition of the *Odyssey* in an attempt to highlight the importance of ancestry for the ancient Greeks by the classical period.¹²² In addition, in Herodotus' account of the seer Deiphonus it is clear that despite there being doubt over the lineage of the seer, he was still employed nonetheless, which inevitably raises the issue of how much emphasis the Greeks really placed in hereditary mantic ability and indeed, the ancestry of a seer.¹²³

¹²⁰ Hdt. IX:95. See also, Kett (1966) 32 and Roth (1982) 273. How and Wells (1928) II:329 suggest that the expression used here implies an individual who works for hire as a day labourer and infer that 'Such soothsaying for hire was viewed with contempt.' It may be that they considered Herodotus' turn of phrase to have a negative connotation in this particular instance. For further discussion of this, see Collins (2008a) 51.

¹²¹ As observed by Suárez (2009b) 665.

¹²² See Lambert (1993) 293-318 for a comparison of Greek and Zulu sacrificial ritual where the ancestors feature prominently as recipients of the sacrifices.

¹²³ Johnston (2008) 110-111. See also, Hdt. IX:95; Kett (1966) 32 and Roth (1982) 273.

What I mean by this is that although it was clearly appreciated if a μάντις was linked to a famous mantic family, it does not seem to have been the deciding factor in terms of employment. Perhaps there was a tendency to employ a μάντις who could claim famous heritage, even if this might not necessarily have been true. This is evident in the aforementioned account of Deiphonus in Herodotus.

As in other occupations, such as doctors and certain priesthoods, the ancient Greeks appear to have regarded better those who selectively shared their τέχνη between family members.¹²⁴ They seem to have had a respect for tradition in that sense, which is clear when you consider roles such as that of the Iamidae and Clytiadae at Olympia.¹²⁵ Even if it was not fully believed that the mantic art was a hereditary skill, this does not mean that specialist training from within a renowned mantic family would not have been more beneficial to a μάντις rather than starting out autonomously and unsupported by fellow specialists.

Consequently even if there was doubt over whether Deiphonus was truly the son of Euenius, if Deiphonus had learned his τέχνη from Euenius then the truth did not necessarily matter. Also, Herodotus does not appear to be convinced either way in terms of Deiphonus' parentage, and even though there was doubt expressed there is still no proof to the contrary.

Also, we know from the instances in which the Delphic Oracle was proven false that when such an occasion occurred it was often believed that it was the fault of the individual who was caught, not the system itself, and the fact that the corrupt individual had been exposed was proof enough that the gods were punishing them for their deceit.¹²⁶

Ultimately it seems that the concept of tradition was of great importance to the ancient Greeks, the idea of having an established position which was held by the same bloodline for many generations was obviously appealing. In addition these names commanded as much respect as the position that they held, and this reputation is what accompanied other μάντις from the same family when they branched out independently.

¹²⁴ See above n.118.

¹²⁵ See Parke (1967) 174.

¹²⁶ Hdt. VI:66 for the Spartan king Cleomenes bribing the Pythia. See Hollmann (2005) 279-327 for an informative article exploring the manipulation of signs in Herodotus.

i.c). Performing μαντική:

So what exactly was a trainee μάντις required to learn? The differences between and the details of the divinatory practices of a μάντις portrayed in myth and a μάντις portrayed in our historical sources will be addressed in the next chapter. Yet what must be noted is that without ‘the genius of successful opportunism’,¹²⁷ as Halliday phrases it, a μάντις would have made little impression in their line of business.

Certainly a μάντις was expected to learn a vast amount of omens, portents and the appearance of entrails in order to interpret signs correctly. Nevertheless, the sheer unpredictability of these events would require a μάντις to perform spontaneously to a certain extent and this is a skill that is not inherent in all.

A μάντις was required primarily to examine the occurrence, then to offer the elucidation, and undoubtedly there was an element of performance required. I do not mean this in a dramatic sense as such, more so that the response of the μάντις could have been open to scrutiny, as Xenophon once intimated,¹²⁸ and so there was a need for the μάντις to react with pure confidence in his interpretation.

Hence a trainee μάντις would have needed to have been sharp-witted, opportunistic and self-assured. The stability of his position would have rested entirely upon his own conviction and knowledge, and if other individuals were present who also claimed familiarity with μαντική, then he would have had to respond swiftly and accurately in order to retain employment. This characteristic was more of an unspoken requirement for μάντις, yet almost certainly it was an important contributing factor towards their success or failure. Moreover there are instances on military campaigns of a general or a king having more than one μάντις to hand, most likely in case something unfortunate happened to the first one.¹²⁹ This is worth

¹²⁷ Halliday (1913) 56.

¹²⁸ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29.

¹²⁹ Consider the variety of religious specialists who accompanied Alexander the Great on campaign. Naiden (2013a) 413. Xenophon also mentions more than one μάντις on campaign at a time in the *Anabasis*. Xen. *Anab.* IV:3.17; V:2.9; V:5.3.

keeping in mind when studying individual μάντεις, as it might also suggest an element of competition between them.

A possible example of this comes from the fifth century B.C. The seer Megistias was the μάντις aiding the Spartans in the battle of Thermopylae. We are informed by Herodotus that he sent away his son before the Persians surrounded them.¹³⁰ It has been suggested by Flower that Megistias' son was in apprenticeship to his father; thus in the event of his father being killed or wounded he would have been able to take over the required divinatory practices. Naturally this was a worst case scenario, as the main purpose of their pairing would have been for his son (whose name Herodotus does not divulge) to learn the τέχνη from his father. This is a suggestion which I am inclined to agree with, as we have already established that the mantic art was kept within each mantic family as much as possible. It seems perfectly reasonable that the most plausible explanation for the presence of Megistias' son is that he followed his father to the battlefield in order to learn μαντική.¹³¹

The difficulty here is that in most instances the sources did not feel it necessary to note the relationship between the principal μάντις and the accompanying μάντις or μάντεις on a particular campaign, especially if this was such a regular practice that it was considered unworthy of mention.

I find it highly likely that any μάντεις accompanying an expedition were in place at the very least to assist the primary μάντις. Therefore it is perfectly sensible to infer that any accompanying μάντεις were also in apprenticeship to the primary μάντις. Furthermore any apprentice to a primary μάντις would also have had to have been a member of the same mantic family.

This is because, as there was inevitably fierce competition between μάντεις for prominence, I doubt that any μάντις from another mantic family would have been willing to work in a position below another rival, irrespective of the ancestry and skill set of the primary

¹³⁰ Hdt. VII:221. See also Kett (1966) 59-60 and Roth (1982) 279.

¹³¹ See Flower (2008a) 191 and (2008b) 46.

μάντις, unless they were still training or were rather inexperienced.¹³² Learning the τέχνη must have been a time consuming and complex process, with so many possible occurrences and interpretations to memorise. It is highly unlikely that any primary μάντις would have been willing to train a μάντις from a rival mantic family.

Yet in the case of the original founding μάντις and some of their descendants from myth, their acquisition of mantic ability was extraordinary and in many instances involved some sort of direct divine interference. This divine element fades in the attainment of μαντική as we reach historical accounts, as the common means of gaining mantic ability changed and the τέχνη became achievable through learning. There is a passage in Pausanias worth raising here as it reveals his understanding of what skills were possessed by historical μάντις.

‘...χωρίς δὲ πλὴν ὅσους ἐξ Ἀπόλλωνος μανῆναι λέγουσι τὸ ἀρχαῖον, μάντεών γ’ οὐδεὶς χρησμολόγος ἦν, ἀγαθοὶ δὲ ὄνειρατα ἐξηγήσασθαι καὶ διαγνῶναι πτήσεις ὀρνίθων καὶ σπλάγχνα ἱερείων.’

‘...but in fact apart from those who suffered Apollonian madness none of the soothsayers in antiquity was a prophet; they were good at exegesis of dreams, the diagnosis of the flight of birds, the scrying of holy entrails.’¹³³

Pausanias believed that it was only the seers of myth who received direct divine inspiration from Apollo and that the role of seers by the classical period was to explain dreams, to interpret the flight patterns of birds and to interpret entrails. This assessment certainly agrees with what accounts we have of historical μάντις in ancient Greece during the late archaic and classical periods and this further emphasises the evolution of the role from myth, where it is clear that divine intervention and direct divine inspiration were much more prevalent occurrences for μάντις, especially when in direct contrast with the μάντις of the classical period.

That is not to say that there are no instances of divine inspiration preserved for

¹³² Consider the competition between Calchas and Mopsus to demonstrate who the best seer was. After losing to Mopsus, Calchas allegedly died of a broken heart. Apollod. *Epit.* VI:2-5. For further discussion of this episode, see chapter III 75.

¹³³ Paus. I:34.4, tr. Levi. See also Dillery (2005) 170 for a discussion of this passage.

historical μάντεις at all, and these will be explored in greater detail elsewhere.¹³⁴ Pausanias also distinguishes here between χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις by suggesting that by this stage χρησμολόγοι were the only type of independent diviner capable of divine inspiration and that it was only the μάντεις of myth who were inspired by Apollo. This assessment will be discussed in greater depth when we discuss the evolution of χρησμολόγοι later in this chapter.¹³⁵ For the moment, let us continue in agreement with this premise.

Therefore, if the concept of divine inspiration had indeed dwindled by the classical period, then Pausanias' assessment here is accurate, and the other skills that he mentions were all achievable through learning. This is where the emphasis on ancestry and mantic families were of great importance to independent diviners in the classical period.

i.d). Mantic Families:

There are four leading mantic families of whom we are told in the sources, the Iamidae, the Melampodidae, the Telliadae and the Clytiadae. Each of these families were named after their famous founding seer from myth and from each founder a lineage can be traced including many seers that appear in the ancient sources. For the existence of these founding μάντεις there is variable quality of remaining testimony.

Pindar's *Olympian VI* tells the story of the seer Iamus, who was the son of Apollo, in reasonable detail and there is mention of Melampus in Herodotus, Pausanias and Apollodorus,¹³⁶ yet sadly for Tellias and Clytius, very little information has been preserved. Nevertheless, for their descendants at least, there is some information available in the sources which can be scrutinised.

The Iamidae were a mantic family which originated from Elis and they were active at the Oracle of Zeus at Olympia alongside the Clytiadae.¹³⁷ Pindar's *Olympian VI* describes the

¹³⁴ See chapter IV 135-136.

¹³⁵ See below 51.

¹³⁶ Apoll. *Lib.* I:9, II:2, III:12; Hdt. II:49, IX:34; Paus. I:43, II:18, IV:36, VIII:18; Pind. *O.* VI.

¹³⁷ Hdt. IX:33.

Iamidae as a well-established family of μάντις.¹³⁸ Iamus had many famous descendants who were seers, including the Arcadian Callias, the Elean Teisamenos and his grandson Agias.¹³⁹

Iamus was allegedly the son of Apollo and Evadne (daughter of Poseidon and the Spartan heroine Pitane), who hid the birth of Iamus as she was ashamed of her pregnancy. Iamus was raised by snakes and bees and when he was old enough he had the mantic art bestowed upon him by Apollo. The Iamidae are described as practising divination from the cracked skin of the burnt sacrificial victims at Olympia.¹⁴⁰ However one of the Iamid descendants, Thrasybulus, invented another method of Hepatoscopy by interpreting the intestines of dogs.¹⁴¹ The Iamidae were said to have had close connections with Sparta, but also with Mantinea and Messene and their prophecies were expressed in detailed oracles.¹⁴²

Melampus was the son of Amythaon and the brother of Bias, husband of Iphianassa, father of Mantius and grandfather of Amphiaraus. Those of his descendants that became seers include Polyphides, Polyidus and Theoclymenus.¹⁴³ Herodotus attests that he was the founder of the cult of Dionysus in Greece.¹⁴⁴ He was born in Pylos & gained his mantic ability by snakes licking his ears. Despite the fact that his mantic abilities were not a result of direct divine interference, he is treated in the sources with as much reverence as Iamus, and he appears to have passed on his mantic abilities to his descendants. It is perhaps worth noting here that in the *Odyssey* Theoclymenus correctly predicted the fate awaiting the suitors of Penelope.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ Pind. *O.* VI:70-71. See Flower (2008a) for an insightful article on the Iamidae and mantic families.

¹³⁹ See Kett (1966) 52, 71-73 and 20; and Roth (1982) 272, 286 and 268-269 for source references on each seer.

¹⁴⁰ Parke (1967) 184-185; Flower (2008a) 193.

¹⁴¹ Paus. VI:2.5.

¹⁴² Paus. III:11.6, III:12.8, IV:16.1, X:5.8.

¹⁴³ See Suárez (2009b) 660-668 for an assessment of the descendants of the Melampodidae.

¹⁴⁴ Hdt. II:49. See Caldwell (1980) 51-52 for parallels drawn between Melampus and shamanism. For further reading on Greek shamanism, see Burkert (1962) 35-55.

¹⁴⁵ Hom. *Od.* XX:351-70. de Jong suggests that Theoclymenus' importance as a seer is played down firstly by the references to him as 'stranger' (536, 542, XVII:163, XX:360), which perhaps explains why Penelope, Telemachus and the Suitors meet his prophecies with relative indifference. 'Only the narratees know the authority on which his prophecies are based, and will fully appreciate the folly of the Suitors who laugh at him.' (2001) 372.

There is little information in the sources describing Tellias; it seems for the moment that he is little more than a name to us. The Telliadae were another family of seers from Elis.¹⁴⁶ We are told in Herodotus of his descendant Hegesistratus, who was seer to Mardonius at the battle of Plataea. Yet the defeat of the Persians in this battle was not due to poor interpretation of the entrails on the part of Hegesistratus, it was Mardonius' decision to disregard the omens that resulted in the Persian defeat (or so we are told by Herodotus).¹⁴⁷

The Clytiadae were the descendants of the Greek seer Clytius, and a reference to him in Pausanias provides us with an idea of his lineage.

‘Μελάμποδος γὰρ ἦν τοῦ Ἀμυθάωνος Μάντιος, τοῦ δὲ Ὀϊκλῆς, Κλυτίος δὲ Ἀλκμαίωνος τοῦ Ἀμφιαράου τοῦ Ὀϊκλέου; ἐγγόνει δὲ τῷ Ἀλκμαίονι ὁ Κλυτίος ἐκ τῆς Φηγέως θυγατρὸς καὶ ἐς τὴν Ἥλιν μετόκησε, τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς εἶναι τῆς μητρὸς σύννοικος φεύγων, ἅτε τοῦ Ἀλκμαίωνος ἐπιστάμενος σφᾶς εἰργασμένους τὸν φόνον.’

‘For Mantios was a son of Melampous son of Amythaon, Mantios's son was Oikles, and Klytios was the son of Alkmaion, grandson of Amphiaraios and great-grandson of Oikles. Klytios was Alkmaion's son by Phegeus's daughter, and he migrated to Elis because of not wanting to live with his mother's brothers, who he knew were responsible for Alkmaion's murder.’¹⁴⁸

This provides us with a small amount of information on Clytius' ancestry, but there is little detail in this account to explain how or why Clytius was the founder of a separate mantic family which branched off from the Melampodidae. The most sensible suggestion is that this occurred after his migration to Elis, away from the other members of the Melampodidae. Clytius lived several generations after Melampus, so it is perhaps surprising that he is known for successfully establishing a mantic family of seers when we do not have an origin myth

¹⁴⁶ Hdt. IX:37. See Weniger (1915) 79 for a discussion on the Telliadae branch of seers.

¹⁴⁷ Hdt. IX:41; Kett (1966) 42-43 and Roth (1982) 276-277. See Flower (2008b) 169-170 for a brief discussion on this. See also chapter III 82.

¹⁴⁸ Paus. VI:17.6, tr. Levi.

detailing the acquisition of his mantic abilities. I do not doubt that at some point such a myth existed, it is just unfortunate that it has not been preserved.¹⁴⁹

The Clytiadae were active in a professional capacity at the Oracle of Zeus at Olympia. Both the Iamidae and the Clytiadae held positions of prominence there and both of these roles were held solely by these mantic families over the course of a few centuries.¹⁵⁰ It is not uncommon for positions like these to be held traditionally by one or two families, but it is unusual that μάντεις were the type of religious specialists chosen to hold such responsibility at Olympia rather than priests or other more customary temple officials.¹⁵¹ Lists detailing the names of the μάντεις who held these positions have been preserved at Olympia, and this provides a rare insight into these two mantic families working together in the setting of an oracular centre.¹⁵²

These positions of prominence at a sanctuary are a rarity, as independent diviners were seldom linked solely to a particular site – usually they spent their time in a more nomadic capacity by travelling between city states in search of employment, yet here we have two of the four prominent mantic families working collectively at Olympia. The significance of this is that we have definitive epigraphical proof of their existence in an official capacity at this site and evidence of this kind is invaluable for such a typically ‘unofficial’ role.¹⁵³

Additionally, the fact that both the Iamidae and the Clytiadae continued to maintain their position over such a long period of time demonstrates the reverence that their role held at Olympia.¹⁵⁴ Clearly there was a strong regard and belief in their τέχνη, otherwise they would not have successfully held such a prominent post for so many generations. This further emphasises the importance of ancestry and reputation, as it is likely that the longer both

¹⁴⁹ See Flower (2008b) 42-43 for a brief discussion on the historicity of these founding manteis.

¹⁵⁰ Cic. *De Div.* I:41.91; See also Parke (1967) 174.

¹⁵¹ For an introduction to Olympia see Parke (1967) chapter VIII. For Greek priests and religious officials see Dignas and Trampedach eds. (2008).

¹⁵² See Weniger (1915) 53-115 for the list of seers at Olympia.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ See Schachter (2000) 292-295 for the Clytiadae and Flower (2008a) for the Iamidae.

families maintained their position at Olympia, the more established the tradition of their presence became.

Of course as only one or two μάντεις from each family could hold a position at Olympia at any one time, it is certain that there were other μάντεις from within the two families that had to find employment elsewhere. Individuals like Teisamenos of Elis (who unusually enough in Herodotus is described as a member of both the Iamid and the Clytiadae families)¹⁵⁵ appear practising μαντική elsewhere and earn their own fame and renown, devoid of any association with oracular centres or sanctuaries. Of course the fact that Teisamenos was a descendant of one of these (if not both) mantic families undoubtedly helped him to gain his position at Sparta (although of course the oracle from Delphi no doubt held the most sway in that respect);¹⁵⁶ and this further emphasises the importance of ancestry for a μάντις when endeavouring to secure employment.

Teisamenos is a perfect example of a μάντις reaping the benefits of his labour, as undoubtedly a talented μάντις was invaluable, especially on the battlefield. The Delphic Oracle guaranteed that Teisamenos would win five contests, and because of this the Spartans were willing even to bestow Spartan citizenship upon Teisamenos and his brother so that they might acquire his assistance on their military campaigns.¹⁵⁷ This account alone demonstrates the importance of a talented μάντις to a city state.

So far we have seen how essential it was for a μάντις to be able to demonstrate a long ancestry of prominent seers, or to be associated with one of the four famous mantic families. Now let us turn to the second type of independent diviner in this study, in order to see if the history of χρησμολόγοι contained any parallels with μάντεις.

ii). Χρησμολόγοι:

¹⁵⁵ Hdt. IX:33; Kett (1966) 71-73 and Roth (1982) 286. How and Wells (1936) II:301 suggest that Κλυτιάδην is a late addition, as there is no reference to the Clytiadae in Pausanias III:12.8, which they believe is derived from Herodotus.

¹⁵⁶ Hdt. IX:35. See also Flower (2008b) 40-42.

¹⁵⁷ Hdt. IX:35. See How & Wells (1936) II:303 for a discussion of this bestowal.

The difficulty that one is faced with when investigating the origins of χρησμολόγοι is that the search for mention in the sources is far less fruitful. There is no known occurrence of the role before Herodotus and as some of the more detailed accounts of individual χρησμολόγοι are found here also, he is one of our most valuable sources on this matter. The term χρησμολόγος (-οι) was clearly firmly established by the time Herodotus, Thucydides and Aristophanes were writing in the fifth century B.C. as they all mention χρησμολόγοι and felt no need to provide an explanation of the role. This implies that the term was in regular use by this period at least.

We know of the χρησμολόγοι Onomacritos, Amphilytos and Lasos as mentioned by Herodotus in the late stages of the sixth century and early fifth century B.C. assisting the Peisistratids and it is unlikely that one of them was the first χρησμολόγος, as surely if this was the case then Herodotus would have made a point of highlighting it.¹⁵⁸

As we have no earlier evidence to go by, it is very difficult to determine exactly when the term χρησμολόγος was first established. Only that the role was more common by the late sixth century B.C. as both Onomacritos and Lasos are mentioned in Herodotus as competing in Athens at this time. It is highly unlikely that they were the only two, otherwise one of them could have found perfectly profitable business elsewhere and there would have been no need for them to compete with one another.¹⁵⁹ This in turn implies that there were other χρησμολόγοι practising in Greece throughout this period and that they were regularly competing for positions of prominence within various city states.

Before we can explore in depth the significance of this role, it is essential to consider what qualities were required in order to practise successfully as a χρησμολόγος and how one

¹⁵⁸ Hdt. I:62. See Kett (1966) 21-22 and Roth (1982) 289 for Amphilytos, and Hdt. VII:6 for Onomacritos and Lasos. For Onomacritos see also Kett (1966) 61-63 and Roth (1982) 291-292. Consider Herodotus crediting Melampus with the introduction of the cult of Dionysus to Greece (Hdt. II:49). Herodotus made a point of mentioning noteworthy facts about individuals and if one of the χρησμολόγοι that he mentions was considered to have been the first, he would certainly have made a point of mentioning it. This is demonstrated further in other parts of his work where he details the ancestry of individual μάντιες. See chapter II 56-57.

¹⁵⁹ Hdt. VII:6.

went about acquiring the necessary skills, as perhaps in turn this will reveal more about the past of these mysterious diviners.

ii.a). Becoming a χρησμολόγος

As our first introduction to a χρησμολόγος is not until the classical period, the origins of these individuals remain somewhat of a mystery. We have no accounts from myth, nor the names of any founding χρησμολόγοι, and the sources recording their activities within city states do not provide any further information on their past. Therefore it is clear that the origins of this particular role cannot be approached in the same way as those of a μάντις. We cannot be sure whether the original bestowal of the skill set required to become a χρησμολόγος originally held any divine aspect to it, nor whether there was any exchange of senses or saliva-like substances.

As a result of this, at present it is impossible to make any sort of direct comparison between the two roles where mythic origins are concerned. Instead, it seems more sensible to look at the role itself and the characteristics of the individuals which we are presented with, so that we might understand what personality traits would have been required in order to perform the duties of a χρησμολόγος successfully.

ii.b). Acquiring Chresmologic Abilities:

The distinct lack of early sources poses a clear challenge when endeavouring to determine what was required in order to qualify as a χρησμολόγος. To establish this precisely it is necessary to start with the earliest source, in order to ascertain what a χρησμολόγος was actually required to do. Therefore Herodotus provides a natural starting point. The earliest mentioned χρησμολόγος is found in book I of his *Histories* where Herodotus describes the tyrant Peisistratos' attempts to seize power in Athens. Amphilytos the Acarnanian assisted Peisistratos in his final effort and in Herodotus' account he spontaneously produced this inspired prophecy in hexameter verse:

ἔρριπται δ' ὁ βόλος, τὸ δὲ δίκτυον ἐκπεπέτασται,

θύννοι δ' οἰμήσουσι σεληναίης διὰ νυκτός.'

'The net is cast and the meshes of it are spread wide;

in the moonlit night the tunnies will come darting through the sea.'¹⁶⁰

This extract is particularly of interest, as Herodotus twice states that Amphilytos was under direct divine inspiration, and this in turn indicates that divine inspiration was an aspect of the role for χρησμολόγοι in the sixth century B.C. at least. The reason why we can infer from this text that χρησμολόγοι prophesied at this time is because if this was the only instance in which a χρησμολόγος had produced a spontaneous oracle then Herodotus would certainly have deemed it worthy of additional emphasis; we have already acknowledged that he was prone to highlighting such things.¹⁶¹

What is especially significant about this passage is the fact that Amphilytos is described by Herodotus as a χρησμολόγος, and what is unusual here is that Herodotus does not once refer to Amphilytos as a μάντις. Therefore this passage is especially thought-provoking when one considers our initial understanding of the primary role and expectations of a μάντις in direct comparison to the primary role and expectations of a χρησμολόγος during this period.¹⁶² This passage is also of great interest when it is compared directly with Pausanias' view of divine inspiration only occurring for the μάντιες of myth.¹⁶³

It has already been asserted that the work of Herodotus inspired some aspects of the work of Pausanias,¹⁶⁴ therefore surely it is unsurprising for there to be parallels. This passage does seem to imply that χρησμολόγοι were the exception to the rule where divine inspiration was concerned. Perhaps this is the true meaning of 'singer of oracles'.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Hdt. I:62, tr. de Sélincourt. How and Wells (1928) I:84 suggest that χρησμολόγος here may indicate either the seer himself or the collector of oracles (c.f. Thuc. II:8.2). See also Asheri, Lloyd and Corcella (2007) 'He may have been an Acarnanian by origin who was given Athenian citizenship by Peisistratos.' See also, Pollard (1965) 108-109 and Lavelle (1991) 317-324.

¹⁶¹ See Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 41-42 for a discussion of this oracular pronouncement.

¹⁶² For more on the differences between μάντιες and χρησμολόγοι, see chapter I 21-27.

¹⁶³ Paus. I:34.4. See 43 earlier in this chapter for the text.

¹⁶⁴ How and Wells (1936) II:301.

¹⁶⁵ Paus. I.34.4. See also chapter I 20-21 for an assessment of the true definition of a χρησμολόγος.

Another striking feature of this passage is that here Amphilytos has taken on the role of a μάντις in battle; he accompanied Peisistratos on his campaign and assessed the omens to ascertain whether or not it was propitious for Peisistratos to attack. It was only after the spontaneous pronouncement from Amphilytos that the tyrant attacked the Athenians while they were unprepared and was successful, as from the sight of Amphilytos divinely inspired he may well have believed the gods to be on his side and thus utilised this opportunity while the Athenians were distracted.¹⁶⁶

We know from Herodotus that Peisistratos was a believer or at the very least someone who utilised χρησμολόγοι; he definitely recognised the importance of their roles in the administration of his tyranny.¹⁶⁷ We even see his sons utilising χρησμολόγοι in their administration of Athens after his death.¹⁶⁸ Yet Herodotus informs us that Onomacritos was exiled for falsifying oracles and he also describes Onomacritos' careful selection of oracles, which supported the Persian expedition to Greece.¹⁶⁹ This gives an overall impression of a manipulative character, who recognised how his collection of oracular pronouncements could be used to his own advantage.

Not only this, there is also the fact that the Peisistratids recognised and utilised that same purpose for Onomacritos while they were exiled at the court of king Xerxes.¹⁷⁰ This undoubtedly has an effect on how we consider the Peisistratids to have viewed and employed divination, both during their tyranny and throughout their exile. Perhaps the most sensible conclusion which can be gleaned from this passage is that Peisistratos recognised that once Amphilytos had prophesied optimistically, his men would have been confident of victory and so he then chose to act at this time in order to secure the city.

¹⁶⁶ See Shapiro (1990) 337-338 for a discussion of this event.

¹⁶⁷ Aristoph. *Peace* 1071; See also Shapiro (1990) 338.

¹⁶⁸ See Hdt. V:90 saying that Hippias was well-versed in oracles. See also, Hdt. VII:6 for Hippias, Hipparchos and Onomacritos.

¹⁶⁹ Hdt. VII:6. See also, Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 72-73.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Undoubtedly the men would have fought better as the oracular pronouncement assured success. Whatever the motivation, there is clear support of Amphilytos' credibility as a divinely inspired individual in Herodotus and this deserves to be highlighted.

ii.c). Performing the role:

Evidently it was essential for a χρησμόςλογος to possess an oracular collection, as without one (unless divinely inspired) a χρησμόςλογος would have been of little use. If for now we overlook the exception of Amphilytos, it is clear that for the most part, prophetic abilities were not required in order to be a χρησμόςλογος. From Herodotus' account of Lasos and Onomacritos, it is apparent that χρησμολόγοι were selecting and reciting from oracular collections instead.¹⁷¹ These collections were usually attributed to a famous seer from myth; in the case of Onomacritos his collection was accredited to Musaeus.¹⁷²

The task of a χρησμόςλογος was to produce the most relevant oracle from his collection and then to persuade either the individual or the masses concerned that this oracle referred to the current event and that it should be taken into account whilst making a decision on the best course of action to be taken. As in the case of a μάντις, it would surely have been a requirement for a χρησμόςλογος to be opportunistic, convincing and quick-thinking. He would certainly have had to know his collection well, so that when an opportunity arose he would have known instantly which oracle would have been best suited to the occasion.

If the χρησμόςλογος was able to recite this oracle immediately, then surely this would have had a greater impact and would have made the oracle more convincing to its audience. In fact, as previously noted, χρησμόςλογος is often translated as 'singer of oracles'; perhaps this interpretation of the noun is indicative of the requirements of the role.¹⁷³ Therefore in the case of a χρησμόςλογος, if there was no requirement for mantic ability, then he would have had

¹⁷¹ Ibid VII:6. See Fontenrose (1978) 152-153 for a treatment of the skill set and reputation of χρησμολόγοι and seers, which he treats as separate roles.

¹⁷² Ibid. See Baumgarten (1998) 38-69 for further reading on mythic seers and the oracular collections attributed to their pronouncements.

¹⁷³ See chapter I 21-22 for a discussion of this.

to impress his audience with both the fame of the author of his oracular collection and by demonstrating his own intricate knowledge of the oracular collection instead.

The oracular collection would have to have been attributed to a well-known seer who was considered to have possessed accurate mantic abilities, as undoubtedly this would have affected the regard in which the collection was held. In terms of training, we have no knowledge as to how a χρησμόςολογος came to practise his τέχνη. That said if his main requirement was to learn and market his oracles, would the background of a χρησμόςολογος even have been perceived as a necessary area for scrutiny by the ancient Greeks?

One of the main areas of interest where the study of χρησμόςολογοί is concerned is to evaluate the abilities, treatment and reception of such individuals, especially in comparison to a μάντις when exploring both roles in detail. The distinctions between them, when highlighted by ancient authors, make this all the more intriguing.

The question of reception where a χρησμόςολογος is concerned at first appearance seems to be a fairly simple one, when you consider the way that a χρησμόςολογος is presented in the ancient sources. Onomacritos was ejected from Athens after he was discovered falsifying an oracle and Aristophanes' presentation of Hierocles in *Peace* portrays χρησμόςολογοί in a very suspicious light.¹⁷⁴

Despite this, although many fifth century B.C. writers present χρησμόςολογοί negatively, this does not necessarily confirm that all were regarded in this way, and indeed we know from Thucydides and Herodotus that despite 'common feeling' where χρησμόςολογοί were concerned, their input was still taken under consideration when a big decision needed to be made.

Consider how the χρησμόςολογοί were blamed after the failure of the Sicilian Expedition for their part in encouraging the Athenians to send an invasion force.¹⁷⁵ This instance clearly demonstrates that χρησμόςολογοί had the potential to reach positions of

¹⁷⁴ Aristoph. *Peace* 1052-1119, but one has to bear in mind the motivations behind Aristophanes' negative portrayal of the diviner. For a more detailed treatment of this, see chapter I 23-24.

¹⁷⁵ Thuc. VIII:1. For further discussion of this, see chapter I 24-25. See also Dillery (2005) 167-231 and Hornblower (2008) 750-75 for interpretations of this passage.

prominence and high regard within city states, as without a high level of influence we would not know of their involvement in certain political and military decisions in the classical period, as ancient writers would not have deemed it worthy of recording otherwise.

Perhaps as a result of the potential misgivings that some ancient Greek writers may have had as to the integrity of χρησμολόγοι, we are still no closer to finding out how a χρησμολόγος came to learn the trade, because of its omission in the ancient sources. As stated previously, an oracular collection was clearly necessary along with an opportunistic and charismatic nature. From what evidence we have it seems that a χρησμολόγος required nothing more.

In the case of μάντις, it can be argued that often a ‘trainee’ μάντις travelled with a practising μάντις from the same mantic family in order to learn the τέχνη. In the case of a χρησμολόγος this seems to be entirely unnecessary, as the oracles from the oracular collections could have been interpreted in any way that the χρησμολόγος deemed pertinent to the current situation, therefore there was less need for guidance for those new to the craft.

In addition, there is little evidence to suggest that χρησμολόγοι travelled in pairs or groups, or that they trained one another in the τέχνη, although we do have proof of several χρησμολόγοι operating independently of one another within the same city state, in Athens in particular.¹⁷⁶

ii.d). Chresmologic families:

Currently there is even less evidence available concerning the lineage of a χρησμολόγος. At present there is nothing to suggest that individual χρησμολόγοι were associated with ‘chresmologic’ families in the same way that μάντις were, and it does not seem likely that the τέχνη was passed down within a particular bloodline.

¹⁷⁶ See Thuc. VIII:1.1 for his reference to the anger of the Athenians towards the χρησμολόγοι and μάντις for their part in encouraging the disastrous Sicilian expedition. Note, the anger is aimed at several of each type of independent diviner.

From their representation in the sources it is evident that χρησμολόγοι stood as individuals with no emphasis on ancestry or background, and this is rare for supposedly traditional professions of this kind (if we are to compare χρησμολόγοι directly with μάντις in this respect).¹⁷⁷ From this evidence the following question arises. If ‘χρησμόλογος’ was considered to be a relatively new term and a completely different role to that of a μάντις, does it matter that lineage does not seem to have been focused on in the same way as it was for a μάντις?

If the role of a χρησμόλογος was to perform from, catalogue and carry around oracular collections, was there any divine skill necessary other than the ability to be familiar with and to interpret the texts? In which case, surely there was no need to focus on heritage as the χρησμολόγοι were not passing on a special talent, individuals were simply acquiring oracular collections and using them for consultations.

From Herodotus it is clear in the instance of Onomacritos that he did not receive divine inspiration of any kind, but that he selected the relevant oracle from his collection and recited it. If this is truly the case, all that an aspiring χρησμόλογος would have needed was an oracular collection in order to begin practising the τέχνη and a working knowledge of his collection so that he might select a relevant oracle when the occasion demanded it.

A modern parallel could perhaps be drawn with a present-day tarot card reader. Similar to a χρησμόλογος, he or she would need to acquire tarot cards as their equivalent of an oracular collection in order to practise their τέχνη. They would then select a card or cards from their collection as part of a consultation and subsequently they would provide an interpretation on the basis of the results of the reading. In some ways the credibility of a modern tarot card reader is questionable and they can be treated and received in a similar way to that of a χρησμόλογος.

Both roles may receive varying degrees of scepticism, yet they are still able to make a living with different levels of success, as there is still a definite belief in their type of

¹⁷⁷ See chapter I 18-28 for a comparison of χρησμολόγοι and μάντις with other religious specialists of the classical period.

divination and therefore a need for them to practise their τέχνη. The key difference between a χρησμολόγος and a μάντις, as with a tarot card reader and a psychic, is the arguable lack of an inspired element to their particular methods of divination, yet as we shall see over the course of this work, this inspired element appears to wane in divination as we reach more historical accounts of working μάντις in the classical period.

iii). The importance of ancestry and history:

When examining the ancestry and the history of χρησμολόγοι and μάντις we have seen over the course of this chapter that they need to be considered as individual and separate roles due to the clear differences in their origins and the different methods recorded in the sources for acquiring the τέχνη in each role. For μάντις especially there was a clear interest in their ancestry and the concept that μαντική was passed on within mantic families explains why this was of interest to potential employers, as the importance of a talented independent diviner has already been made clear.

The role of a χρησμολόγος, does not seem to have had the same mystery surrounding it in terms of the acquisition of the τέχνη, and there is little evidence in the ancient sources to suggest that potential employers were particularly interested in the ancestry of χρησμολόγοι. As this was a relatively new type of religious specialist, there may not have been much of a chance for any key traditions or requirements to have been established by the time the deeds of χρησμολόγοι of the classical period were recorded.

Yet despite some clear differences both roles developed to fill a void as a more instant means of divine consultation and as such both χρησμολόγοι and μάντις were able to maintain positions of prominence within city states during the classical period. The next area which needs further scrutiny is the evolution of the role of independent diviners from myth to the classical period and their place within the Greek city states.

Chapter III

The Evolution of the Role

There is a natural temptation when initially approaching a study of various aspects of ancient Greek divination to project a modern scepticism onto our perception of how divination was considered and used in the ancient world. Divination was not a row of ritual hoops which a politician or general was required to jump through in order to gain the approval of the gods and the people for a specific venture or decision.¹⁷⁸

We must accept that the majority of the ancient Greeks believed in divination entirely and that they considered divination to be an essential part of their decision making process. It was as much a part of their everyday life as other religious practices and superstition are for many people today.¹⁷⁹ An independent diviner was the key person to consult with the necessary skills in ritual practices and interpretation, who was able to help enquirers by performing sacrifices and understanding the intricacies of the τέχνη.

i). The role of μάντεις in myth:

In order to explore fully the role that independent diviners played within the ancient Greek world, it seems prudent to consider the transition of the role from the concept of a seer as depicted in myth and epic to the historical seers by the end of the classical period, so that we might better understand how the historical seer evolved into the individuals that we are presented with in the works of ancient writers. Chronologically it is difficult to compile a completely comprehensive overview of the practices of seers throughout this timeframe due to scanty evidence in places. There is far more evidence preserved from the classical period than the archaic period and beyond.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ See the introduction to this thesis for a definition of divination and further reading 9-12.

¹⁷⁹ For a discussion on the role of independent diviners as part of the decision making process, see 14-16 of introduction.

¹⁸⁰ See 7-9 of the introduction for methodology. See also Burkert (1979) for further reading.

Nevertheless, it is important to scrutinise the evidence that we have as objectively as possible, in order to gain a better understanding of the influence of myth on historical seers. Seers from myth appear frequently in myth-based literature, and the accounts that we have detailing the part that they played in significant events provide us with a fairly detailed insight into their skills, status and reception.

It is prudent to note that when studying literature it is important to retain an awareness of the probable aims of the writer in his presentation of seers in his literary works. Yet in my view the advantages heavily outweigh the disadvantages.¹⁸¹ In this chapter we shall consider some key individuals from Greek myth whose influence, status and reputation continued to command reverence in the ancestry and practices of later independent diviners from the classical period.

One of the more famous independent diviners from Greek myth is the μάντις Calchas, who accompanied the Argives to fight in the Trojan War. We are told by Pausanias that Agamemnon sought out Calchas to persuade him to accompany the Greek army to Troy.

‘καὶ Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν ὁ Ἀγαμέμνων ἐποίησεν, ἠνίκα ἦλθε Κάλχαντα οἰκοῦντα ἐν Μεγάρῳις ἐς Ἴλιον ἔπεσθαι πείσων.’

‘Also Agamemnon built a sanctuary of Artemis when he came to persuade Kalchas who lived at Megara to follow him to Troy.’¹⁸²

The fact that this myth preserved in Pausanias informs us that Agamemnon needed to seek out Calchas to persuade him to join the expedition is very informative. This passage implies that Calchas’ reputation as a seer made him a desirable asset for Agamemnon’s military operation.

From this passage it is clear that we should never underestimate the value of a talented independent diviner to the leader of an army, not only in terms of their divine knowledge and

¹⁸¹ See 7-9 of introduction. See also Mikalson (1983) 9-10 and Suárez (2009b) 2 for a discussion of the difficulties that scholars face in this area.

¹⁸² Paus. I:43.1, tr. Levi.

skills in interpretation, but also for the undeniable influence the results of these interpretations had on army morale. In this instance we have an independent diviner whose presence was greatly desired for a military expedition; this is demonstrated in the fact that king Agamemnon extended an invitation to Calchas personally. This instance verifies that there was a clear need for at least one skilled μάντις on a military campaign.

The necessity for a skilled independent diviner seems not to have wavered during the passage of time between the accounts preserved in the ancient sources of mythic events and the historical events recorded from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.; the desperation of the Spartans to obtain the services of the Elean seer Teisamenos supports this observation further.¹⁸³ The need for independent diviners only seems to have dwindled a few generations after the death of Alexander the Great, although this transition will be discussed later in this section.¹⁸⁴ For the moment let us return to the demand for and the role of an independent diviner in ancient Greek myth, continuing with Calchas.

It seems that in terms of job description, the main expectations of Calchas by the Greek army throughout the Trojan War were for him to interpret all varieties of omens, to prophesy spontaneously as required and to present his views in council when the kings met to deliberate strategy. There are accounts from a variety of ancient sources which describe Calchas performing these tasks and by carefully scrutinising these examples we can generate a more detailed image of the role of an independent diviner in Greek myth.¹⁸⁵

The *Iliad* and other texts based around the events of the Trojan War cite instances in which Calchas accurately identifies required conditions which must be met in order for the Greeks to achieve success in various ventures.¹⁸⁶ For example, according to Apollodorus it was Calchas who prophesied that Troy could not be taken without the bow and arrows of

¹⁸³ Hdt. IX:33.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter V 276 For a discussion of the presence of seers in the Hellenistic period; see also Flower (2008b) 126-131.

¹⁸⁵ Hom. *Il.* I:68-120, II:301-335; Apollod. *Epit.* III:15, V:8-11, 23; Eur. *IA.* 80.

¹⁸⁶ Apollod. *Epit.* III:15, 21, V:8; *Lib.* III.13.8; Eur. *IA.* 80; Hom. *Il.* 92-100.

Herakles, and Odysseus then sought these from Lemnos and brought them back in order to fulfil the required conditions for victory.¹⁸⁷

It seems that Calchas was expected to play the role of ‘problem solver’, either by highlighting solutions to unexpected occurrences which hindered the progress of the Greek campaign against the Trojans, or by anticipating obstacles and overcoming them before they had an opportunity to affect proceedings. Apollodorus also informs us that it was Calchas who stated that Troy could not be taken without the help of Achilles.¹⁸⁸

A point worth observing from this passage is that Apollodorus does not declare that Calchas prophesied, but instead adds that ‘he was saying (λέγωντος)’ that Achilles was an essential element of the undertaking, as he would enable the Achaeans to seize Troy.¹⁸⁹ It is sensible to deduce that in this particular instance this statement from Calchas would have been understood by those present to be either a spontaneous prophecy or an interpretation of a portent: thus these were words of great importance, which is why it was so vital for the Greeks to find Achilles and to encourage him to join the Achaean side. This prophecy was given further credence because Thetis believed Calchas’ pronouncement and as a consequence disguised Achilles as a young woman to prevent the Greeks from taking him with them to fight against the Trojans.¹⁹⁰

In contrast to this instance of Calchas’ words perhaps needing to be interpreted as prophetic, where the prophecy of the bow and arrows of Herakles is concerned, we are informed that Calchas prophesied. In this particular instance we are told by Apollodorus that Calchas ‘θεεπίζει’. Therefore Apollodorus does use verbs to indicate an act of prophecy rather than with the sole purpose of indicating speech. Yet it seems that regardless of his choice of verb, the utterances of Calchas were taken seriously as prophetic expressions irrespective of how we are informed he spoke them.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ Apollod. *Epit.* V:8.

¹⁸⁸ Apollod. *Lib.* III.13.8.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ For a detailed study of Calchas, see Perret (1939) 23-58.

¹⁹¹ Apollod. *Epit.* V:8. For further reading on prophecy, see Callan (1985) 125-140 and Tedlock (2001) 189-197.

The power of his words and the extent of his reputation would have meant that it was highly likely that any tactical suggestion made by Calchas would have been considered to have had prophetic meaning and divine support, and inevitably this would have had an impact upon army morale.

Another very informative passage from the *Iliad* is one which describes an instance where the god Poseidon decided to intervene on behalf of the Greek side, despite Zeus having declared that the gods must refrain from involving themselves in the war. In order to disguise his true identity, Poseidon appeared by the ships and posed as Calchas in order to motivate both of the Aiantes to fight with godlike strength.¹⁹² The fact that Poseidon chose to pose as Calchas provides confirmation of two points. Predominantly, that Calchas was clearly an individual in a position of the utmost authority and respect among the Greek leaders, in that his words would have been both heeded and adhered to, despite his primary role as a seer and not a military tactician.

Secondly, it is clear from this passage that Calchas was expected to be present on the battlefield, which in turn implies that Calchas played more than just an advisory role on the Greek side during the Trojan War. Warrior μάνταις featured in the ancient sources of both myth and history, and it is sensible to recognise that if Calchas was present in the throes of battle to interpret omens, then surely it would have been necessary for him to be able to defend himself against approaching enemies.¹⁹³

Ultimately Calchas' presence on the Trojan campaign was requested more for his renowned skills in divination rather than his extensive knowledge of and instinct for military strategy. If Calchas had merely suggested that Achilles had the potential to be a useful asset towards the military expedition then this was simply stating the obvious, however as he pronounced that Troy would not fall without Achilles, this statement implies far more

¹⁹² Hom. *Il.* XIII:40-86.

¹⁹³ Pind. *N.* IX:24-27 describes Amphiaraus as possessing μάχαιον θυμόν (warrior spirit). See also, Nagy (2000) 102-103. For further reading on seers in battle, see chapter IV 136-147.

prophetic value and his words would have induced Agamemnon to endeavour to obtain Achilles' allegiance.

Instances such as this demonstrate clearly the amount of authority that a seer possessed. Arguably the most significant example which emphasises the vast amount of influence that Calchas had upon the decision making processes of his peers (completely regardless of their social status), is the fact that he was able to persuade the Greek leaders that Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia needed to be sacrificed at Aulis to appease Artemis, so that the goddess would quell the unfavourable winds which prevented the departure of the Greeks from Aulis towards Troy. In addition, he told the Greek leaders that Troy would never be taken if Iphigenia lived.¹⁹⁴

In the play by Euripides *Iphigenia in Aulis*, there is a discussion between Menelaus and Agamemnon in which they are debating whether or not to sacrifice Agamemnon's daughter. The overall sense of this passage is that Agamemnon has no choice in the matter and Menelaus observes in line 518 that Agamemnon is too fearful of the power of the people, but in the subsequent line it becomes apparent that what Agamemnon really fears is the influence of the seer on the army.¹⁹⁵

From this discussion in the play it is clear that the ancient Greeks were well aware of how much influence an independent diviner could possess, especially over the masses. The difficulty was that seers needed to be consulted in order to provide guidance on the gods' views towards current events, and this was an accepted feature of everyday life in the ancient world.

Hence kings, politicians and generals had no choice but to work with these individuals and follow their guidance regardless of how the advice impacted upon them personally. It must also be remembered that in most instances, these leaders believed entirely upon the

¹⁹⁴ Apollod. *Epit.* III.21; Eur. *IA.* 85-105.

¹⁹⁵ Eur. *IA.* 506-540. For an exploration of human sacrifice using Iphigenia as one of three case studies, see Henrichs (1981) 195-235.

consultation process. A wariness of independent diviners does not imply a disbelief in divination itself.

It seems that whenever any sort of obstacle appeared which had to be overcome, Calchas was the person who was always sought out and consulted with the expectation that he would be able to find a solution.¹⁹⁶ It appears that at this time the general understanding was that these obstacles often had a divine origin and so with his specific expertise Calchas (or any other seer for that matter) would have been able to consult the gods in some way and glean what action was required (if any) to resolve the problem. This highlights the significance of independent diviners in Greek myth; without their interpretative skills those without knowledge of *μαντική* would have been unable to function in everyday life, as they perceived the gods to be watching and influencing them through every important decision and life event.

We have seen that in essence the main role of an independent diviner at this time was either to provide a confirmation of divine assent or dissent towards certain actions or to provide an explanation of a current state of affairs or omen of some sort and perhaps to offer a proposed solution if required. What these instances also show is that independent diviners were consulted in the same way as oracular centres in the fact that they were required to provide (or at least allude to) solutions to problems. In the same way that the Pythia was consulted to ask Apollo how to rid a city state of a plague, drought or famine for instance,¹⁹⁷ so an independent diviner was consulted as a mobile method of divine communication.¹⁹⁸

This is why Agamemnon was forced to concede to Calchas' advice on how to rid the Greek army of the plague from Apollo.¹⁹⁹ It is not as though he would have necessarily been able to obtain a second opinion on the matter easily, nor was the Greek army in a location where they would have been able to consult an oracular centre readily for a solution to this problem. In terms of the sheer amount of time that it would have taken to travel to mainland

¹⁹⁶ See Johnston (2008) 118.

¹⁹⁷ See Hdt. I:167, VI:151, V:82, VI:139 for a few examples of these Delphic consultations. See Dyer (1969) 6-11 for a discussion of instances where supplicants requested purification at Delphi.

¹⁹⁸ See Meyer (2002) for a further reading on decision making in ancient Greece.

¹⁹⁹ Hom. *Il.* I:105-190.

Greece and back again, this would have made the venture seem absurd and unnecessary due to the presence of an independent diviner in the Greek camp, who was readily available for consultation and perfectly capable of providing a recommended course of action.²⁰⁰

In addition, although it is highly likely that other seers were present or at least in the vicinity at this point, it would have seemed impious for Agamemnon to express doubt at Calchas' capabilities publicly, as the seer had already demonstrated a prominent history of accuracy and a high level of skill in his mantic abilities, thus verified by a successful track record of interpretations and prophecies.²⁰¹

The appeasement of Artemis by the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia is a prime example of this.²⁰² Not only would Agamemnon have appeared irreverent by disregarding Calchas' assessment of the correct course of action, but he would also have appeared to be a lesser man in front of his peers by the fact that he was avoiding adhering to the seer's recommendations by consulting another diviner for a second opinion, and all would have been aware that this was only due to his own dissatisfaction with what was asked of him, rather than a genuine concern regarding Calchas' capability when it came to making an accurate interpretation of current events and a recommendation on how best to appease Apollo in this particular instance.

Alternatively, if there was due cause to doubt Calchas' abilities as a seer, then this inevitably would have suggested that Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter for no good reason. Thus Agamemnon was forced to adhere to Calchas' recommendations and release his prize of Chryseis back to her father, who was a priest of Apollo. However, just because Agamemnon was forced to comply with what was asked of him, this does not mean that he did so with good grace.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ See 12-14 of the introduction for the accessibility of oracular centres.

²⁰¹ The pronouncements concerning Achilles (Apollod. *Lib.* III.13.8) and the duration of the Trojan war (Hom. *Il.* II:301-335; Apollod. *Epit.* III.15-17) support this.

²⁰² Apollod. *Epit.* III.21; Eur. *IA.* 85-105.

²⁰³ Hom. *Il.* I:105-190.

The most noteworthy aspect of Calchas' role in the Trojan War is the fact that he was expected both to attend and to provide counsel at meetings of the kings and senior commanders, and to perform this role alongside his responsibilities as a religious specialist at public assemblies.²⁰⁴ The power that Calchas possessed as a medium of divine knowledge was ultimately more persuasive in an assembly than the opinion of a king who did not possess mantic abilities when it came to making important decisions.²⁰⁵ Agamemnon was never going to be in a position where it would have been to his advantage to ignore the will of the gods, which is emphasised in his deliberations during Euripides' play about whether or not he should sacrifice his daughter.²⁰⁶ In addition we know that the gods did not punish lightly for this offence; consider Cassandra's punishment for refusing to adhere to Apollo's will.²⁰⁷

This does not necessarily mean that on every occasion their instructions were strictly adhered to. As implied above, Agamemnon was greatly angered at having to relinquish Chryseis to appease Apollo and he scolded Calchas for never divining good tidings, yet ultimately he was still forced to comply. However, after releasing his hostage Agamemnon then claimed Achilles' prize Briseis for himself in compensation for the loss of Chryseis, which in turn was the catalyst for the anger of Achilles and the reason for his refusal to fight for the Argives.

In essence, although the solution recommended by Calchas was effective in ending the plague from Apollo, in reality the resulting events meant that Agamemnon was not truly punished for his offence as he still managed to keep a prize.²⁰⁸ It could be suggested that the refusal of Achilles to fight was an alternative punishment, but I do not feel that this was of

²⁰⁴ Hom. *Il.* I:55-100. See Eidinow (2014) 83 for an alternative assessment of the role of Calchas. Eidinow treats Calchas as though he is more Agamemnon's personal μάντις, but the fact that he is able to influence affairs on a much grander scale and not always at Agamemnon's instigation demonstrates that he must have held some form of official position serving the Greek army as a whole.

²⁰⁵ See Flower (2008b) 156-159.

²⁰⁶ Eur. *IA.* 105-110; 1260-1276.

²⁰⁷ Servius. II:247. For a treatment of this episode, see, chapter II 33. For further reading on Cassandra, see Mazzoldi (2002) 145-154.

²⁰⁸ Hom. *Il.* I:105-190. See Eidinow (2014) 83.

equal measure in comparison to a seer forcing a king to adhere reluctantly to the will of an angered deity.²⁰⁹

In this chapter we have explored instances from the events of the Trojan War which describe Calchas interpreting unusual occurrences or omens. A particularly curious choice for scrutiny is an omen from the very beginning of the war where the Argives witnessed a serpent which fell upon and consumed a mother sparrow in her nest and her eight babies before suddenly turning into stone. This was immediately interpreted by Calchas to mean that the war would last for nine years and that Troy would fall in the tenth year.²¹⁰

This passage demonstrates the interpretative capabilities of a μάντις from myth. Omens such as this could occur unexpectedly and it was the role of an independent diviner to respond to this immediately, as those who bore witness to the portent with no knowledge of μαντική would undoubtedly have been unnerved until the meaning of the divine message had been explained. As omens were so unpredictable in their timing and nature a seer was most certainly required to be resourceful in terms of producing an instant interpretation of the portent for those present.

A point from this account worth noting is that we are informed that Calchas prophesied (θεοπροπέων) immediately after the portent occurred.²¹¹ This could be interpreted in two ways, either Calchas was struck with divine inspiration upon witnessing the portent and so received divine assistance in his explanation of the omen, or because his interpretation of the portent was an implication of future events, this was automatically understood to be a prophecy. The latter explanation seems much more plausible, as there is little evidence in the sources to confirm that Calchas received divine inspiration directly from the gods.²¹²

His particular τέχνη appears to have been one which required more of an interpretative element rather than an inspired one, although his contest against Mopsus indicates that he

²⁰⁹ Hom. *Il.* I:105-285.

²¹⁰ Hom. *Il.* II:301-335; Apollod. *Epit.* III.15-17. Eidinow (2002) 83.

²¹¹ Hom. *Il.* II:301-335.

²¹² See Dietrich (1990) 161-162 for a discussion of prophecy in Homer.

might have had more capabilities in this area than the *Iliad* indicates.²¹³ Another observation concerning this prophecy is that it was referred to when Odysseus addressed the assembly and Agamemnon directly. He explained to all those present that they should maintain their course, as after nine years of enduring the challenges of war he could understand full well all of their frustrations. That said there was no need to wait for much longer, as the prophecy of Calchas promised to guarantee victory in the tenth year of the war. The fact that he ended this speech in the following way merits further scrutiny.

‘καὶ μείνατ’ ἐπὶ χρόνον ὄφρα δαῶμεν
ἢ ἔτεδὸν Κάλχας μαντεύεται ἧε καὶ οὐκί.’
‘Bear with it, my friends, and wait for a time longer,
until we can learn whether Calchas’ prophecy is true or not.’²¹⁴

This passage is revealing, as this speech hints at a suspicion as to whether Calchas’ prophecy would be realised or not. This is a clear indication that mistrust did exist where seers were concerned, yet Odysseus still finished this speech with a proclamation that events were unfolding as Calchas had foretold, as they were all still present awaiting victory at Troy, nine years after that initial prophecy was made.²¹⁵

Thus the implication of the speech is that Odysseus hoped that Calchas’ words were true, as after nine years at war, a tenth would have seemed trivial in comparison, especially if victory at Troy could be guaranteed in this time. Yet the excerpt quoted above does still indicate a hint of mistrust and foreboding, as if they reached the final year of the war and there was no victory, where would that leave the Achaean force and how would that realisation bode for Calchas? If his words had not come to pass, would there have been some sort of punishment or repercussion for the seer? This mistrust is also visible in Agamemnon’s tirade at Calchas

²¹³ Ibid 157-174 for an overview of oracles and divine inspiration. See below 75 for the contest between Calchas and Mopsus.

²¹⁴ Hom. *Il.* II:298-300, tr. Hammond.

²¹⁵ For a discussion of scepticism and mistrust towards seers, see chapter V 184-186.

accusing him of never prophesising anything good for the king when he revealed that Agamemnon must return Chryseis to her father.²¹⁶

It is important to note that this particular criticism does not necessarily hint that Agamemnon did not believe Calchas' portents to be accurate, it is more a complaint that he did not feel that the majority of these interpretations necessarily worked in his favour. It seems that Agamemnon's anger occurred more because he was behaving badly like a petulant king. It does not appear that his rage at Calchas was well justified in this particular instance and as his insults do not seem to question the seer's capabilities in divination, it is clear that they were merely to vent the king's frustration and that they had no real foundation in terms of providing evidence of disbelief in Calchas' capabilities as a seer. Even the hint of distrust on the part of Odysseus in no way expresses absolute doubt as to the accuracy of Calchas' prophecy and it most certainly does not assert that Odysseus does not believe in divination as a τέχνη. An instance preserved in Hyginus emphasises this further.

Odysseus heard about an oracle (the origin of this oracle is not specified), which declared that Odysseus would return to Ithaca alone, twenty years after leaving for Troy. He took heed of this oracle and tried to avoid fulfilling his oath of arms to Menelaus by pretending to be insane. He yoked a horse and ox to the plough and attempted to cultivate his land. The trick would have worked had Telemachus not been placed in his path to prove that he was feigning madness.²¹⁷

Clearly Odysseus was not willing to overlook such an ominous pronouncement and he was even willing to break an oath and incur the wrath of the sons of Atreus in order to avoid the prophecy being fulfilled, and oath-breaking was considered to be a serious act of impiety in the ancient world.²¹⁸ Occurrences such as this reveal that despite the occasional allusion towards doubt at a seer's capabilities, the influence of divination as a whole on the decision-

²¹⁶ Hom. *Il.* I:100-20.

²¹⁷ Hyg. *Fab. Lib.* 95.

²¹⁸ For further reading on oaths, see Burkert (1985a) 250-254; Mikalson (1983) 31-38. See also, Sommerstein and Torrance (2014).

making process most certainly prevailed and it is evidently a prominent theme throughout the preserved accounts of Greek myth and epic.

From these passages we can see that the role of Calchas on the Greek side was a diverse and authoritative one. Arguably he stood equal among kings in terms of influence even if he did not possess the same title, and his words were capable of affecting the morale of an entire army. Bremmer considers all seers in the *Iliad* either to be kings or to possess royal blood, yet Calchas as the son of Thestor, who was a priest of Apollo, does not seem to have had the same regal origins.²¹⁹ There are certainly other seers in the text to support this idea, but there is insufficient evidence to suggest that this could be applicable across the entirety of seers from myth, nor does there seem to be any sort of expectation for all mythic kings to possess mantic abilities.²²⁰

There are several instances in the *Iliad* which confirm that Calchas was a well-respected and authoritative member of the Greek leaders and that his predictions and interpretations were adhered to and actioned. His introduction in book I of the *Iliad* justifies further his position and prominence.

ἦτοι ὃ γ' ὡς εἰπὼν κατ' ἄρ' ἔζετο: τοῖσι δ' ἀνέστη
Κάλχας Θεστορίδης οἰωνοπόλων ὄχ' ἄριστος,
ὃς ἤδη τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
καὶ νήεσσ' ἠγήσατ' Ἀχαιῶν Ἴλιον εἴσω
ἦν διὰ μαντοσύνην, τήν οἱ πόρε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.'

'Then there stood up in the assembly Calchas,

Thestor's son, far the best of augurs,

who knew what is, and what will be, and what was before.

He had guided the Achaians' ships into Ilios

²¹⁹ Bremmer (1996) 100.

²²⁰ See Hom. *Il.* II:831 for Merops of Percote; II:858 for Chromis & the ornithomancer Ennomos; see also V:149-151 for old Eurydamas, although whether these individuals can each be considered royal is debatable. For a discussion of these seers failing to see either their own demise or that of their sons at Troy see Suárez (2009b) 7.

through his seercraft, which Phoebus Apollo had granted him.’²²¹

The key phrase in this passage is the mention of Calchas’ knowledge of the past, present and future. From this we can infer that for the ancient Greeks it was not only essential for an independent diviner to have an understanding of possible outcomes, but it seems that there was also an expectation for μάντις to be all knowing, for them to possess wisdom and experience from past events, to have the scope and perception to understand the influence of the present, as well as possessing the ability to identify the various consequences which would result from a choice of possible actions.

We are very fortunate to have such details preserved describing the actions of Calchas, but it is important to consider other seers from myth too, in order to obtain a more representative view of independent diviners in myth.²²²

Melampus was the founding μάντις of the famous Melampodidae branch of Greek seers. As noted in the previous chapter, Apollodorus informs us that Melampus acquired the mantic art by having his ears licked by snakes, thus enabling him to understand animals.²²³ As animals and birds were considered to be the messengers of the gods, his capabilities in this area brought Melampus great renown as a talented μάντις.

A notable story documenting his mantic ability is provided by Apollodorus, in which Melampus’ brother Bias asked his brother for help in acquiring the oxen of Phylacus. Melampus agreed to help but informed his brother that he would only acquire the oxen after serving a year in prison for attempting to steal them. This all happened as predicted and after nearly a year in prison Melampus overheard the worms above him discussing how little of the beam remained intact in the ceiling, therefore he requested to be moved to another cell. Shortly after Melampus was moved the ceiling collapsed and Phylacus released him out of sheer amazement at his μαντική.²²⁴

²²¹ Hom. *Il.* I.68, tr. Hammond.

²²² For further reading on the portrayal of Calchas in Homeric epic, see Trampedach (2008) 207-214.

²²³ Apollod. *Lib.* I:9.11. See also, chapter II 44.

²²⁴ *Ibid.* I:9.12-13.

Phylacus then asked Melampus to help him to discern why his son was impotent, which Melampus agreed to do, in exchange for the oxen. Melampus then sacrificed two bulls and after cutting them up he summoned the birds. The arrival of a vulture informed him of the reason for Phylacus' son's impotence and what action was required in order to cure his ailment. Melampus then released the vulture and after acting upon its instructions, he healed Phylacus' son and obtained the oxen for his brother Bias.²²⁵ This is an informative passage, as it details what skills Melampus possessed in terms of mantic ability, and this in turn provides details of the mantic capabilities of the μάντεις from myth.

Initially we are told by Apollodorus that Melampus was capable of prophesising, as he successfully predicted his imprisonment and acquisition of the oxen after a year. Secondly, we know that he can communicate with animals and birds, as seen in his interactions with the worms and the vulture. Finally, we are also informed in this account that he performed animal sacrifices. It seems that there is less mention of animal sacrifice for the purposes of divination in accounts of mythic events in contrast to historical works. The implication is that the practice of animal sacrifice where divination is concerned may well have been introduced much later than the other methods of divination used by the μάντεις of myth.²²⁶

Melampus became king of a portion of Argos alongside his brother Bias, after curing the women of Argos from a madness induced by Dionysus. The fact that Melampus was able to acquire a portion of a kingdom demonstrates the resourceful nature of talented independent diviners in the fact that they were able to negotiate vast rewards for their services.²²⁷

Amphiaraus was a descendent of Melampus and is chiefly known for both his role as a hunter of the Calydonian boar and for his position as one of the Argonauts who accompanied

²²⁵ Apollod. *Lib.* I:11-13. See also, Suárez (2009b) 658-667 for a treatment of Melampodidae ancestry. For an introduction to the Melampodid, see Löffler (1963). See also chapter II 44-46.

²²⁶ See Kirk (1981) 41-90; Burkert (1983) 1-12 and Ullucci (2011) 57-75 for further reading on animal sacrifice.

²²⁷ See Bremmer (1993) 154-155 for a discussion of seer-kings. See Hdt. IX:33 for Teisamenos of Elis as an example of a historical seer who was able to obtain Spartan citizenship for himself and his brother in exchange for his mantic expertise. Thus historical μάντεις were also fully capable of negotiating rich rewards for their services, just like their mythic counterparts. See also Flower (2008b) 197-206 for more on Teisamenos. See also, below 79-80.

Jason in search of the famous Golden Fleece.²²⁸ He was also ruler for a time in Argos and he is one of our examples from myth of a μόντις who was both a king and a warrior. He famously joined the expedition of the Seven against Thebes but was swallowed by the earth after he was overtaken by his pursuing enemy Periclymenus and he was made immortal by Zeus.²²⁹ He was then worshipped as a hero across Greece and the spot where he was said to have disappeared became a shrine to him.²³⁰

Amphiaraus is a useful example of an independent diviner from myth to explore because of his high social standing as a monarch but also for his mantic and military talents. There is not a lot of reference to him in employment as a seer; because of this we are forced to rely upon the descriptions in the sources attesting his mantic abilities and his descent from Melampus, which as we know were generally accepted by the ancient Greeks to confirm his μαντική.²³¹

Theoclymenus was an independent diviner who appears in the *Odyssey*, and he accompanied Telemachus back from his journey to Pylos where he had hoped to learn the fate of his missing father Odysseus. We are told in the *Odyssey* that Theoclymenus practised ornithomancy and we know that he also predicted the return of Odysseus and prophesied to the suitors of their imminent deaths.²³²

Bremmer is not convinced of the historicity of Theoclymenus and suggests that he was invented by Homer as a companion for Telemachus whilst he searched for his father.²³³ Yet this a curious observation considering the historicity of all of the characters in the *Odyssey* could be called into question if one so wished.

²²⁸ Apollod. I:8.2, IX:16.

²²⁹ Apollod. III:6.8.

²³⁰ Hdt. VIII:134. See also, Nilsson (1932) 115.

²³¹ Paus. II:13.7 for an account of how Amphiaraus acquired his mantic ability. See Soph. *OC*. 1310-1315 for a description of Amphiaraus' skills as both a warrior and a μόντις. See also Aesch. *Seven*. See Van 't Wout (2006) 1-18 for a discussion of Amphiaraus' prophecy in Pind. *P*. VIII:44-55. See also Nagy (2000) 97-118 for an exploration of epic vision in Pind. *P*. VIII and Aesch. *Seven*.

²³² Hom. *Od*. XV:223-264.

²³³ Bremmer (1996) 98. See Levine (1983) 1-7, who believes that the appearance of Theoclymenus and his prophecies are pivotal to the plot of the *Odyssey*.

Another leading representative of independent diviners in myth was the μάντις Teiresias. He was a blind seer,²³⁴ and is one of the most famous seers from Greek myth, and as such he was the seer of choice to appear in the role of ‘wise advisor’ in Greek tragedy written in the classical period in particular. Teiresias had the gift of divine sight and he was able to observe signs, most notably the behaviour of birds, in order to gauge the opinion of the gods towards the main events within each play that he featured in, and inevitably these predictions held some sort of tragic consequences for the main protagonists.²³⁵

Teiresias is primarily known as the resident seer of the Cadmeans of Thebes and he lived from the time of Cadmus, right up until just after Thebes was sacked by the Epigonoι. This was said to have been seven generations.²³⁶ Presumably his long life was due to the direct divine bestowal of his μαντική but only a few seers of myth were known to have lived for an abnormal length of time.²³⁷

Manto was the daughter of Teiresias and she was also believed to have possessed the mantic art; this is clear from her name. Ovid refers to her as ‘praescia Manto’, and she is listed in Hyginus’ *Fabulae* as an augur.²³⁸ As there are few details of her life preserved in the sources, it is difficult to confirm whether she was a practising seer, yet she remains a character of great interest, as female independent diviners were nowhere near as common as male.²³⁹ We first hear of Manto as she was carried to Delphi as a prisoner after the Thebans were conquered by the Epigonoι.²⁴⁰

There is little to suggest how she obtained her abilities or what methods of divination she practised, although her birth right as the daughter of Teiresias was most likely enough to assure her contemporaries of her talents. We also know that she was a priestess of Apollo at

²³⁴ For a discussion of how Teiresias acquired his mantic abilities, see chapter II 34-35. For more on blindness in Greek myth, see Buxton (1980) 22-37.

²³⁵ See García Gual (1975) 107-132 and Ugolini (1991) 9-36 for an exploration of the character and representation of Teiresias. See also Roisman (2003) 1-20 for Teiresias in both Soph. *OT*. and Sen. *Oed*.

²³⁶ See Roberts (2005) 758 s.v Teiresias.

²³⁷ See García Gual (1975) 115-116 for a discussion of Teiresias’ long life. See also Pollard (1965) 109-110 for a discussion of shamans in ancient Greece who lived for long periods of time.

²³⁸ *Ov. Met.* VI:157; *Hyg. Fab.* 128.

²³⁹ See Hupfloher (2005) 77-91; Flower (2008b) 211-212 and Johnston (2008) 81.

²⁴⁰ Paus. IX:10.3. See also Raphals (2013) 103.

his oracle in Thebes and that after her capture by the Epigonoι, she then became a priestess of Apollo at Delphi.²⁴¹ There is also reference to her later playing a leading role in the founding of his oracle at Clarus. It seems that she spent some time accompanying her father as he travelled around Greece, but she is mostly portrayed as working at oracular centres in service to Apollo.²⁴² In fact, some myths even suggest that Apollo sired her son Mopsus, although there is also the alternative option, which is that his father was Rhacius.²⁴³

Mopsus was believed to be the founder of Mallos in Asia Minor,²⁴⁴ where he established an oracle, and this existed well into the time of Strabo.²⁴⁵

The prominence of Mopsus as a μάντις is attested in perhaps the most famous Greek myth concerning him, where he defeated Calchas in a contest to see who the wisest diviner was. Calchas died afterwards as it had been foretold that he would die after he met a μάντις wiser than himself.²⁴⁶ How precisely Mopsus acquired his ability has not been recorded, but as we know the concept of him being the son of Apollo would have been an insufficient divine connection to guarantee his μαντική.²⁴⁷ As for his methods of practising divination,²⁴⁸ this contest informs us that Mopsus made inspired pronouncements, as he predicted correctly how many figs were on a fig tree, and how many piglets a pregnant sow would bear, as this was required of him in the μαντική contest against Calchas.²⁴⁸

As we have seen where μάντις of myth are concerned, due to arguably more instances of direct divine involvement, for example the blinding of Teiresias by one of the Olympian gods or the possible siring of Mopsus by Apollo, we encounter independent diviners whose capabilities include divine pronouncements as a result of some form of μαντική bestowal. In addition, it seems that the expectations and requirements of μάντις of myths varied.

²⁴¹ See Flower (2008b) 211-212. Flower suggests that Manto and her sister Daphne were the earliest mortal women to be prophetesses at Delphi. See also, Lyons (1998) 227-237.

²⁴² Ibid. See also Bouché-Leclercq (1880) II:150.

²⁴³ Paus. VII:3.2. See also Metzler (1990) 246; 248.

²⁴⁴ Paus. VII:3.2. For more on the foundation of this colony and others by Mopsus, see Metzler (1990) 140-143.

²⁴⁵ Strab. XIV:5.16; Plut. *de def. Orac.* 45; Conon. *Narrat.* 6.

²⁴⁶ Apollod. *Epit.* VI:2-5. See also Perrett (1939) 23-58.

²⁴⁷ For the acquisition of μαντική, see chapter II 32-40.

²⁴⁸ See Strab. XIV:1.27 or another account in Apollod. *Epit.* VI:2-5. For an assessment of this contest see Lange (2007) 475-477.

Some seers, such as Calchas and Teiresias, maintained employment in association with certain families or key historical events, yet some other seers were able to work in perhaps a more self-interested capacity where they lived out their lives offering their μαντική in exchange for personal gains; Melampus acquiring a kingdom for himself is a prime example.²⁴⁹

This does not mean that those μάντιες who reaped the benefits of their τέχνη were corrupt. It is merely evident that some μάντιες from myth recognised the importance of μαντική to others, therefore they were able to negotiate substantial rewards in exchange for their services.

It seems that the role of a μάντις in myth was for the most part a wide-ranging one. The divinatory requirements involved more of an inspired element, although even that was not necessarily essential, as we do not have instances of divine inspiration for every μάντις from myth. In addition, we have occasions in myth where μάντιες performed an assortment of roles, whether they were kings, warriors or wise advisors, or even an amalgamation of all of these.²⁵⁰ It is necessary to remember this when exploring the independent diviners of the classical period, in order to assess how the role and expectations of seers changed over the centuries.

ii). Transitional period:

The main difficulty with attempting any kind of diachronic exploration of seers from myth to the end of classical period is that inevitably there will be gaps in our knowledge of certain time periods, as due to the long passage of time between then and now there are few preserved ancient sources from certain eras of civilisation.

Naturally the time period encompassing the aptly named Dark Age is not particularly forthcoming and our sources for independent diviners in myth are from sources after this time,

²⁴⁹ Apollod. *Lib.* I:11-13.

²⁵⁰ Ibid for Melampus as a king and a warrior. See Soph. *OC.* 1310-1315 for Amphiaraus as a warrior. See Eur. *Ba.*, *Phoe.*; Soph. *Ant.*, *OT*, Pind. *Isth.* 7, *Nem.* 1; Hom. *Od.* for Teiresias as a wise advisor. See Hom, *Il.* for Calchas in that role. See also Johnston (2008) 109-125.

yet the events to which they are referring happened beforehand, mostly during the peak of Mycenaean civilisation.²⁵¹

To our knowledge the myths from this time are reasonably well documented, but what of the duration between the events of myth and the first written records of historical events?²⁵² For historical independent diviners Herodotus is inevitably our most valuable contemporary source for the late archaic and early classical periods, and indeed it is from his work that our knowledge of *χρησμολόγοι* stems.

It is also from the *Histories* that we have learned much on the uses and ritual practices of historical independent diviners and the roles that they held within city states, on military campaigns and where the foundation of colonies was concerned. As we know from examining the ancient sources, it was most certainly not a requirement to include independent diviners, divinatory practices or even oracles, omens and dreams in ancient works. The fact that any ancient writers chose to preserve these instances is invaluable to us.²⁵³

When it comes to the earlier history of the Greek city states, the earliest historical seer mentioned in Herodotus is Amphilytos, who aided the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos in his final and most successful attempt to install himself as tyrant in Athens. Amphilytos was present at the battle of Pallene and he made the spontaneous oracular pronouncement about the ‘tunny fish’.²⁵⁴ As previously noted, an area of interest here is that Herodotus refers to Amphilytos as a *χρησμολόγος*, yet his actions are more similar to those of a *μάντις*, as he accompanied Peisistratos into battle.²⁵⁵

A much later source detailing events of the archaic period is Pausanias. In his chapter on Messene he recounts the events of the First and Second Messenian wars and the parts played by independent diviners in his historical account. In the First Messenian war (743-724

²⁵¹ See Nilsson (1932) 1-31 for an assessment of how to date Greek mythology.

²⁵² See Thomas (1989) for an overview of oral tradition and the written record in classical Athens.

²⁵³ Thucydides especially is criticised for his omissions where religious influences and divination were concerned. See Jordan (1986) 119-147 and Hornblower (1992) 169-197.

²⁵⁴ Hdt. I:62. For a discussion of this oracle and the role it played in establishing Peisistratos in Athens, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 41-42. See also chapter II 50-52.

²⁵⁵ For more on the differences between *χρησμολόγοι* and *μάντις*, see chapter I 21-27. For further information on independent diviners in battle, see chapter IV 136-148.

B.C.), Pausanias records two seers in service to the Messenians, Epeboleus and Ophioneus.²⁵⁶ Both seers were against the ascension of Aristomenes to the Messenian throne on account of his blood-guilt for murdering his daughter.²⁵⁷

In terms of μαντική Epeboleus is only described as helping to interpret a Delphic oracle regarding human sacrifice.²⁵⁸ Ophioneus is of more interest as he is another blind seer, who once temporarily gained and then lost his sight again due to a headache, in accordance with the fulfilment of a Delphic oracle.²⁵⁹ In addition, Pausanias informs us that he was able to prophesise by finding out all about the lives of those around him, then making predictions about their future. As a method of divination this appears to be little more than informed guess work, but it does still fit the model of an intuitive blind man.²⁶⁰

During the Second Messenian War (685-668 B.C.) Pausanias provides us with the names of the independent diviners who were on each side during the battle of Boar's Grove. Hekas was on the Spartan side²⁶¹ and Theoklos of the Iamidae was on the Messenian side.²⁶² He mentions both seers offering sacrifice and adds that their presence inspired the men on each side to join in battle.²⁶³ We are informed later that Hekas interprets a propitious omen in the form of a lightning flash and Pausanias credits him with a military strategy which enabled the Spartans to defeat the Messenians and conquer the garrison of Eira.²⁶⁴ Theokles also interprets an oracle predicting the defeat of the Messenians and so goes to his death in the same battle.²⁶⁵

During the archaic period it seems that we have more instances of independent diviners in battle than in any other role. From Pausanias it appears to have been believed that during this time seers were not inspired, but that they were able to perform sacrifices and

²⁵⁶ See Kett (1966) 37-38 and Roth (1982) 274 for Epeboleus, and Kett (1966) 64-65 and Roth (1982) 280 for Ophioneus.

²⁵⁷ Paus. IV:10.5.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. IV.9.5-8.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. IV.13.3. See Eidinow (2014) 87 for mention of this account.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. IV.10.6. See also Buxton (1980) 28 and Eidinow (2014) 87.

²⁶¹ See Kett (1966) 35-36 and Roth (1982) 276.

²⁶² See Kett (1966) 45-6 and Roth (1982) 285.

²⁶³ Paus. IV:16.1.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. IV:21.7-8s.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. IV:20.1-3, 21.1-3, 5, 10-12. See also, Foster (2010) 41.n.41 and Eidinow (2014) 87.

interpret omens.²⁶⁶ However, the example of Amphilytos from Herodotus credits the χρησμολόγος with producing a spontaneous prophecy, therefore it seems that there might be some residual influence of divine intervention for independent diviners of the archaic period, just as in myth.

iii). Classical period:

There is far more evidence detailing the role and requirements of independent diviners in the classical period than in the centuries beforehand. Therefore it seems sensible to approach this section by scrutinising a selection of prominent independent diviners initially, then to look at the partnerships which were established between certain renowned statesmen and military minds of the classical period. This will then be followed by a study of the role of independent diviners within the city state and finally an assessment of the importance of seers during the founding of a colony.

As we know from Herodotus,²⁶⁷ the Greek seer Teisamenos was sought out by the Spartans, who wished to employ him after the Delphic Oracle pronounced that he would win five contests. They understood that the oracle referred to military contests rather than athletics (which had been Teisamenos' interpretation of the oracle), and so they approached Teisamenos and invited him to join their army.

Teisamenos recognised that the Spartans needed him greatly and because of this he was able to negotiate Spartan citizenship not only for himself, but for his brother Hegias. The oracle was fulfilled by Spartan victories at the battles of Plataea,²⁶⁸ Tegea, Dipaea, a battle during the Third Messenian War and at Tanagra.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Ibid. I.34.4. For a treatment of this passage, see chapter II 43.

²⁶⁷ Hdt. IX :33-35. See How & Wells (1936) 303 for a discussion of this bestowal.

²⁶⁸ For discussion of a dedicatory inscription *IG VII: 1670* confirming Teisamenos' presence at Plataia, see Pritchett (1979b) 146, 150-151.

²⁶⁹ Ibid. Paus. III:11.6-8. See also Flower (2008b) 40-42; Weniger (1915) 72-73. For further sources information on Teisamenos, see Kett (1966) 71-73 and Roth (1982) 286.

The reward of Spartan citizenship was not bestowed lightly. This demonstrates the value of credible independent diviners to an army during the classical period and this particular event tells us a lot about the significance of seers to the Spartans especially.

Like Calchas, this is an account of a historical μάντις who was personally selected by a city state to assist in a military campaign, the difference here being that in this instance Teisamenos was employed because an oracle by a prestigious and revered oracular centre pronounced that he held a unique mantic and military advantage.²⁷⁰ The pronouncement from Delphi predicting success in Teisamenos' military exploits placed him in a rare and fortunate position as an independent diviner.

Most μάντιες, like Calchas, were mainly employed on the basis of the success of their own reputation and ancestry. In the case of Teisamenos, we are not even told that he practised as a seer before the Spartans entreated him to join them. This makes Teisamenos a rather unusual example from history when compared to the more 'typical' μάντιες of his time.²⁷¹

A point to observe here is that Teisamenos also managed to obtain citizenship for his brother, whom as far as we are aware did not even practise as a seer like his brother Teisamenos. For the Spartans to be prepared to bestow citizenship upon an individual who did not even contribute to Sparta's success as a military power, emphasises even further the need for a talented seer on military campaigns.

That said, as Herodotus is frustratingly quiet on this front, perhaps Teisamenos' brother played more of a role in these battles than we have been made aware, thus earning his place as a Spartan citizen alongside his brother. However, this is unlikely in my opinion, as Herodotus was a writer who enjoyed highlighting the deeds of great men and if he had made the effort to include an account of the feats of Teisamenos in this instance, then surely it would have made sense to feature his brother more prominently, if his mention was truly deserved in

²⁷⁰ For a comparison of Calchas and Teisamenos see Foster (2010) 41-44.

²⁷¹ Despite not knowing whether he practised as a seer, we are informed of his mantic heritage in Hdt. IX:33. Undoubtedly his famous ancestry would have also increased the desire of the Spartans to employ him. See also chapter II 48.

some capacity other than as another recipient of Spartan citizenship and as the brother of a famous seer.²⁷²

Moreover, once Spartan citizenship had been bestowed it seems that it counted not only for Teisamenos and Hegias, but also for their descendants. Hence we are also informed of Agias, the grandson of Teisamenos, who was in service as a seer to the Spartan general Lysander in the late fifth century B.C. Pausanias informs us that his interpretations played a pivotal role in the battle of Aigospotamoi and we are also informed that a statue of him with Lysander was dedicated at Delphi to commemorate the Spartan victory over the Athenians.²⁷³ No doubt Agias' ancestry as the grandson of Teisamenos would have made him a preferred choice as an accompanying independent diviner on this campaign and his close link with the Spartans, presumably as he was also a Spartan citizen, would have ensured his selection.²⁷⁴

Awarding citizenship to an independent diviner has been seen before this particular instance. The first record of this type of reward is found in Herodotus, where Amphilytos is referred to as a native, despite us also being informed that he was Acarnanian. This implies that he had Athenian citizenship bestowed upon him by Peisistratos.²⁷⁵

Another seer who was awarded citizenship in 394/3 B.C., this time in Athens, was the seer Sthorys of Thasos.²⁷⁶ This was presented to him as a reward for his services during a naval battle, presumably Cnidus.²⁷⁷ Osborne asserts in his commentary that this particular decree awarded citizenship not only to Sthorys, but also to his descendants. He also explains that citizenship was awarded here on account of prophetic services rendered by Sthorys during a naval battle.²⁷⁸

²⁷² For a discussion of this episode, see Foster (2010) 35.

²⁷³ See Paus. III:11.5, X:9.7. See also Weniger (1915) 73-74.

²⁷⁴ The fact that Xenophon was also given Spartan citizenship helps us to understand the bestowal of citizenship upon Teisamenos further. It is sensible to conclude that Agias was also a Spartan citizen as we know that once Xenophon himself was settled in Sparta his children were educated in the agoge, just as if they were Spartans of true birth. I see no reason why the descendents of Teisamenos were not treated in the same vein. See Diog. Lae. II:54.

²⁷⁵ Hdt. I:62. For more on Amphilytos, see chapter II 50-52.

²⁷⁶ See Kett (1966) 67-69 and Roth (1982) 283.

²⁷⁷ Osborne (1970) 151-174. See also Bremmer (1996) 108 and Flower (2008b) 103.

²⁷⁸ Osborne (1970) 160, 162. See 163-164 for a discussion on the probability of that naval battle being the battle of Cnidus. See also 165-167 for a discussion of Sthorys in employment as a seer to Conon, after potentially having been selected by the Athenians.

The reward of citizenship was certainly a generous gift for an independent diviner to receive, especially where Spartan citizenship was concerned, as it was so rarely bestowed upon others. Then again, if an independent diviner and their descendants then chose to remain in that city and continued to practise μαντική, then undoubtedly the city state itself would also benefit, as it would have talented independent diviners ready at their disposal, presumably with an obligation of loyalty to the city state which presented them with citizenship. Therefore, the bestowal of citizenship must have been a mutually beneficial agreement.

Returning to independent diviners in the classical period, another μάντις who was in employment at the same time as Teisamenos was the Elean Hegesistratos. In contrast to Teisamenos we are told that Hegesistratos was a seer who was persecuted by the Spartans for reasons not entirely clear; therefore, he was searching for employment in Greece with a view to eluding capture at all costs.

Bearing this in mind it is unsurprising to read in Herodotus that he accepted employment on the Persian side during the Persian wars and that he worked as an independent diviner in service to Mardonius.²⁷⁹ Putting patriotism (or a lack thereof) aside, it is sensible to conclude that Hegesistratos was purely attempting to find employment on an opposite side to the Spartans, and as at this particular point in time the majority of the Greek city states were either subdued by the Persians or on the Spartan side against them, I would imagine that he would have had little choice in the matter – although Herodotus does inform us that he too was rewarded richly for his services.²⁸⁰

iv). Partnerships:

There was certainly a demand for talented seers in the classical period and in Athens especially there are instances which record partnerships between prominent citizens and independent diviners. Whether these seers were initially selected by the assembly to work for

²⁷⁹ Hdt. IX:37-38. See also Kett (1966) 42-43 and Roth (1982) 276-277.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

these individuals is unclear, but it seems that once an effective working partnership was discovered, the pairing was often maintained for future military campaigns.²⁸¹

One of the most famous partnerships to consider is that of the Athenian politician Nicias and the seer Stilbides.²⁸² We are informed by Plutarch that the recent loss of Stilbides contributed towards Nicias' decision to delay in Syracuse and to perform sacrifices after the lunar eclipse during the Sicilian expedition.²⁸³

Stilbides, as it seems, used to allay Nicias' fears of such things and prevented him from overreacting to omens. Thucydides even writes that he considered Nicias to have been addicted to divination.²⁸⁴ Unfortunately, in terms of their partnership, there is little evidence detailing when Stilbides and Nicias were first paired together, but the impression we gain from Plutarch at least, is that Nicias felt the loss of this independent diviner very much, and that he had relied upon him heavily whilst they were working together.

This pairing does not necessarily mean that Stilbides worked exclusively in the employ of Nicias. In Athens in the classical period we are aware of independent diviners who were not only employed to provide divinatory assistance to private individuals, but were also hired by the state and assigned to particular enterprises, whether these enterprises were military expeditions or the founding of colonies.²⁸⁵

Nicias' greatest political rival Alcibiades is also considered to have utilised independent diviners, albeit arguably for more manipulative purposes.²⁸⁶ We are informed by both Thucydides and Plutarch that Alcibiades was known to have been a very ambitious statesman, and it was he who successfully persuaded the Athenians that they should launch an expedition to conquer Sicily in the first place.²⁸⁷ Plutarch informs us that it was Alcibiades

²⁸¹ See also Flower (2008b) 176-183.

²⁸² See Kett (1966) 70-71 and Roth (1982) 283.

²⁸³ Plut. *Nic.* 23; Thuc. VII:50.4. For an overview of the impact of religion on the Sicilian Expedition, see Powell (1979) 15-31.

²⁸⁴ Plut. *Nic.* 4; 23. Thuc. VII:50.4. It is apparent in the sources that most felt that Nicias' reaction to the eclipse was overly pious and that only a few days' delay with the appropriate ritual offerings would have sufficed. See Flower (2008b) 117. For further discussion of the eclipse, see chapter V 175-176.

²⁸⁵ See Bremmer (1993) 158; Mikalson (1983) 48; Flower (2008b) 122-123.

²⁸⁶ Plut. *Nic.* 13. See Flower (2008b) 177 and below for a discussion of this.

²⁸⁷ Plut. *Alc.* 17; Thuc. VI:15.2-3.

who was responsible for hiring the χρησμολόγοι and μάντιες who made the pronouncements in favour of the expedition, and that an envoy was sent to the oracle of Zeus Ammon at Siwa, which brought favourable news. Plutarch also suggests that the envoys suppressed any negative pronouncements, for fear of damaging the expedition with ill-omened words.²⁸⁸ Flower considers both statesmen to have used seers privately in order to support their arguments for or against the Sicilian expedition.

‘Thus both for the believer in traditional religion (Nicias) and for the skeptic (Alcibiades), the testimony of oracles and religious experts was important ammunition in making their respective cases to the Athenian people.’²⁸⁹

I feel that this interpretation of both statesmen is too sceptical. It is clear that Nicias was a very pious man, his use of oracles and independent diviners was for his own comfort, and I would not assume that he utilised these things purely for his own agenda. If there were omens for interpretation, Nicias would have highlighted them regardless of the implications for himself. This is evident in his decision to remain encamped after the lunar eclipse, at the peril of his own life and army. I am sure that Nicias would have been aware of the benefits of presenting oracular pronouncements to support a case, but that does not mean that this was his motivation for doing so.

Where Alcibiades is concerned, it is understood that he was an ambitious man and perhaps this blinded him where the Sicilian expedition was concerned, but I do not believe that this made him a complete sceptic of divination. We are already aware from Plutarch that Alcibiades made use of seers privately.²⁹⁰ If the man was truly such a sceptic, would he have utilised independent diviners in this capacity or should one argue that this too was for show? One of the aims of Flower’s work ‘is to retrieve the image and representation of the seer’,²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Plut. *Nic.* 13.

²⁸⁹ Flower (2008b) 177. For a brief discussion on the piety of Nicias and the impiety of Alcibiades, see Motte (2002) 491.

²⁹⁰ Plut. *Nic.* 13. Bremmer (1993) 157.

²⁹¹ Flower (2008b) 3.

yet by suggesting that Nicias and Alcibiades used divination for manipulative purposes, he does not do the long established reputation of independent diviners justice. This presents the independent diviners utilised by both statesmen as potentially corrupt and easily manipulated themselves, if they were willing to present potentially inaccurate oracles and interpretations solely in favour of or against the expedition.

I find it far more likely that due to there already existing an Athenian predisposition towards conquering Sicily,²⁹² those in favour of the expedition were so focused on this aim that they overlooked any signs to the contrary, and this too is suggested by Plutarch.²⁹³ As Bowden states:

‘The need to conciliate the gods, and the recognition of the danger of ignoring them, might lead communities to act in ways that went against their immediate interests.’²⁹⁴

There are countless instances in the ancient sources of both individuals and groups, armies and city states believing that they understood the will of the gods, but in their attempt to follow this idea of the gods’ will, they inevitably sealed their own fate, often in the opposite way to what they had initially envisaged for their future and often despite several warnings along the way.²⁹⁵ Partnerships between prominent figures and independent diviners were in most cases beneficial for both parties where divination was concerned, and as previously mentioned it could well have been the loss of Stilbides which caused the tragedy experienced by Nicias and his Athenian force in Sicily.

We know that by the 2nd century B.C. in Athens there was an annual position for a mantis to serve the board of Athenian generals.²⁹⁶ Precisely when this position was first established officially is unclear, but its existence is unsurprising, as these partnerships are

²⁹² Thuc. VI:15.2-3.

²⁹³ Plut. *Nic.* 13. For more on the Sicilian expedition see Powell (1979) 15-31 and Hornblower (2011) 147-159; 168-178.

²⁹⁴ Bowden (2005) 5.

²⁹⁵ See Lattimore (1939) 24-35.

²⁹⁶ See Flower (2008b) 122.

evident even from myth through to the time of Alexander the Great, and in Athens especially. Consider the relationship between the Athenian tyrant Hipparchos and the χρησμολόγος Onomacritos, although it was Hipparchos who ejected Onomacritos from Athens on account of his corruption.²⁹⁷

The interest of the Peisistratids in oracular pronouncements is well attested,²⁹⁸ therefore it is sensible to consider their friendship to have been influenced by Onomacritos' knowledge of oracular collections to a certain extent, as these oracles would most certainly have been of interest to Hipparchos. In fact, after the ejection of the Peisistratids, we know that Hippias utilised Onomacritos and his collection to influence Darius I and to convince him that it was propitious for him to invade Greece.²⁹⁹ Therefore in the end, even the evidence suggesting that Onomacritos falsified an oracle was insufficient to deter the Peisistratids from rekindling their relationship with the independent diviner and utilising his skills. As we are later informed by Herodotus, Hippias himself:

‘ὄϊα τοὺς χρησμοὺς ἀτρεκέστατα ἀνδρῶν ἐξεπιστάμενος’

‘who was more familiar than anyone else with the prophecies.’³⁰⁰

Therefore it is surprising that Hippias required the services of Onomacritos at all, but as we are made aware by Xenophon,³⁰¹ it was not uncommon for someone versed in some aspects of divination to require the services of a professional too. Indeed, Peisistratos, who was known as Bakis, still used the seer Amphilytos at the battle of Pallene.³⁰² Unfortunately Herodotus does not tell us anything further about Amphilytos, but I would imagine that he was richly

²⁹⁷ Hdt. VII:6. See also Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 72-73.

²⁹⁸ See also Shapiro (1990) 335-345.

²⁹⁹ Hdt. VII:6. See also chapter IV 160-161.

³⁰⁰ Hdt. V:93, tr. de Sélincourt.

³⁰¹ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29.

³⁰² Hdt. I:62. See also Shapiro (1990) 338.

rewarded for his services and that Peisistratos kept him in employment once he was established as tyrant of Athens.³⁰³

Between 466-457 B.C. the seer Theainetos worked with the Athenian general Tolmides.³⁰⁴ We are also informed in Thucydides that during the siege of Plataea in the Archidamian war there was another seer called Theainetos, who was the son of Tolmides.³⁰⁵ Flower suggests that this Theainetos could have been the grandson of the original and that he named his son Tolmides as a result of his friendship with the Athenian general.³⁰⁶ Knowing the ancient Greek tendency to reuse names of familial significance, this is a suggestion which I am inclined to agree with. It is clear that often a lasting bond developed between independent diviners and their employers.

The use of seers privately was not just restricted to the city of Athens. The Corinthian Timoleon is known to have used seers; the μάντις Orthagoras assisted him in overthrowing his brother when he had installed himself as tyrant of Corinth.³⁰⁷ We are also informed by Plutarch that the campaign which Timoleon was leading to free Sicily from the tyranny of Dionysius II was littered with omens. These omens were interpreted by the seers present as being confirmation of the gods' clear favour towards his cause and this motivated Timoleon's fleet and the Corinthians further in continuing with their expedition.³⁰⁸

This account informs us that independent diviners were also employed to accompany military expeditions in Corinth. Unfortunately, neither Diodorus nor Plutarch inform us as to whether they were employed by the Corinthians or by the individual commander – in this instance, Timoleon. From the presentation of Timoleon in Plutarch, I would be inclined to consider the former most likely, as Timoleon spent twenty years shying away from the

³⁰³ For a discussion of Amphilytos and this pronouncement, see chapter II 50-52.

³⁰⁴ Paus. I:27.5. See Garland (1990) 85.

³⁰⁵ See Kett (1966) 43-44 and Roth (1982) 284.

³⁰⁶ Flower (2008b) 177.

³⁰⁷ Plut. *Tim.* 4. See also Kett (1966) 64 and Roth (1982) 280.

³⁰⁸ Plut. *Tim.* 9. 12; Diod. Sic. XVI:66.3-4.

Corinthian public, therefore it does not seem like he would have had much use for seers in his private life.³⁰⁹

The way that the ancient Greeks remembered the Spartan king Leonidas and the μάντις Megistias the Acarnanian of the Melampodidae after the battle of Thermopylae demonstrates the significance of seers in battle. We are told by Herodotus that Megistias interpreted the impending death of the Spartan force on the next day, but that he remained with Leonidas until the end, despite the fact that he was relieved of his position and permitted to leave. Instead, he sent away his son and died with the Spartan army.³¹⁰

The epitaph set up to commemorate their deaths is recorded in Herodotus. In his account, Herodotus credits the epitaph to the poet Simonides and informs us that Megistias and the poet were guest friends.³¹¹ In the inscription Megistias is the only individual named alongside Leonidas, thus reinforcing his importance and elevating his status to equal that of a Spartan king for his contributions in that battle.³¹²

Another famous partnership was between Alexander the Great and Aristander of Telmessus, and their relationship is one of the best documented. Aristander was not the only seer in employment for Alexander,³¹³ but he is the most frequently mentioned, and he was the closest μάντις to Alexander up until 327 B.C., where he performed any mantic duties expected of him during Alexander's expedition across Egypt and Asia, whether that be the interpretation of bird omens, new phenomena or by performing the customary sacrifices required on a long expedition.³¹⁴ His disappearance after 327 B.C. is somewhat of a mystery. The most common conclusion is that he died soon after the death of Cleitus.³¹⁵

³⁰⁹ Plut. *Tim.* 1-8.

³¹⁰ Hdt. VII:219-220.

³¹¹ Hdt. VII:228. See also chapter II 42-43.

³¹² For further discussion on this, see Dillery (2005) 205 and Foster (2010) 42.

³¹³ As can be seen in Plut. *Alex.* 26 where a number of independent diviners were on hand to interpret bird omens witnessed at the founding of Alexandria.

³¹⁴ Plut. *Alex.*; Arr.; See Robinson Jr. (1929) 195-197 for an assessment of the sources used by later writers to recount Aristander's life whilst he was in service to Alexander.

³¹⁵ Flower (2008b) 178-181.

Aristander is presented as a very skilled μάντις, who was able to perform any divinatory duty expertly. He was able to interpret unusual omens swiftly and soothingly, much to the reassurance of Alexander and his men.³¹⁶ Even after his disappearance, it seems that Alexander relied heavily upon different varieties of seers and soothsayers, and two other μάντιες are also named in the sources as providing mantic services to Alexander during his campaign.³¹⁷ It seems that despite his divine status from Siwa as the official son of Zeus, Alexander was still in great need of frequent divine reassurance. Flower compares the impact of Alexander's loss of Aristander to the evident void left in Nicias' life (from a divination perspective at the very least,) after the loss of Stilbides.³¹⁸

It is clear that partnerships between independent diviners and their employers were rewarding and mutually beneficial arrangements. The employer received reassurance from a skilled seer and the seer received rich rewards and benefits in exchange for their accurate services. We have seen how effective partnerships worked between independent diviners and their employers in the classical period. Now we shall explore the role of seers when they were employed to work solely for the city state, more specifically Athens, as this is where the majority of our evidence originates from.

v). Independent diviners within the city state:

Four notable independent diviners who managed to acquire positions of prominence in Athens during the fifth century B.C. were Sthorys, Diopieithes, Hierocles and Lampon.³¹⁹ From the sources we know that they established for themselves positions of significance within the Athenian political hierarchy alongside their divinatory practices. In addition, we

³¹⁶ Plut. *Alex.* 2, 14, 25, 31, 33, 50-52. See chapter IV 113 and 117 for a discussion of Aristander interpreting bird omens. See below 102-103 for his role in the founding of Alexandria.

³¹⁷ For Cleomantis performing sacrifices with Aristander for the benefit of Cleitus, see Plut. *Alex.* 50; Kett (1966) 54 and Roth (1982) 273. The other seer, named Demophon, accompanied Ptolemy to the temple of Serapis when Alexander was suffering from his deadly illness. Arr. VII:26.2; Kett (1966) 32-33 and Roth (1982) 273-274. See also Flower (2008)b 180.

³¹⁸ Flower (2008b) 181. Plut. *Nic.* 23; Thuc. VII:50.4.

³¹⁹ See Kett (1966) 67-69 and Roth (1982) 283 for Sthorys, Kett (1966) 33-35 and Roth (1982) 290-291 for Diopieithes, Kett (1966) 50-51 and Roth (1982) 277 for Hierocles and Kett (1966) 54-57 and Roth (1982) 278 for Lampon.

know that from these positions they enjoyed privileges only available to the most prominent Athenian citizens. Diopieithes, Sthorys, Lampon and Hierocles were all given free meals in the Prytaneion, one of the most important honours to be bestowed upon an Athenian citizen.³²⁰ As previously observed, Sthorys was not even a native Athenian citizen, therefore in his case the honour is even more notable.³²¹

Diopieithes is a rather confusing independent diviner to distinguish. Primarily, there was potentially more than one prominent Diopieithes in the classical period in employment as a religious specialist in divination. In his dissertation compiling all seers, Kett considers there to have been two Diopieithes and treats them both separately, although he does admit the possibility of there having been only one seer and that Diopieithes left Athens and was employed at Sparta by the start of the fourth century B.C. Roth, in contrast, treats them as the same.³²²

The debate arises because we are informed in Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* that a certain Diopieithes brought in a law before the start of the Peloponnesian war, which was intended to punish impious citizens.³²³ Flower doubts the authenticity of this decree, but admits that it is still useful in that it shows that χρησμολόγοι were still capable of having influence in Athenian politics.³²⁴ I agree that confirming the historicity of the decree itself is not a requirement for this particular study, as it is still capable of showing us how independent diviners were perceived and what their capabilities and influence were at least considered to have been in Athens at this time.³²⁵ This same Diopieithes is also suggested to have been consulted by Nicias on occasion.³²⁶

The other occurrence of the name Diopieithes is found in Xenophon, where an independent diviner of that name was employed in Sparta after the Peloponnesian war. At that

³²⁰ See Oliver (1952a) 11-15 and (1954) 171:23ff.

³²¹ Flower (2008b) 123 and Olsen (1998) 277. See above 81.

³²² Kett (1966) 33-35 and Roth (1982) 290-291. For a discussion of Diopieithes, see Connor (1963) 115-118, who treats both Diopieithes as the same man.

³²³ Plut. *Per.* 32. For a discussion of this decree, see Bremmer (1996) 106.

³²⁴ Flower (2008b) 124.

³²⁵ See Connor (1963) 115-116 for an assessment of Diopieithes' political allegiances.

³²⁶ Aristoph. *Kn.* 1085 and scholion. See Connor (1963) 116.

time there was a debate in Sparta as to the legitimacy of the heir to the Spartan throne Leotychides. On the death of his father Agis, the brother of the king, Agesilaus, also contested for the throne, claiming that Leotychides was in fact the son of the Athenian Alcibiades, who had spent some of his exile from Athens living in Sparta and was alleged to have bedded Agis' wife.³²⁷ In this account Diopeithes, a 'μάλα χρησμολόγος ἀνήρ', cited an oracle from an oracular collection which warned Sparta to beware of a lame kingship.³²⁸ Diopeithes used this oracle with the intention of discrediting Agesilaus, as he was lame, but the Spartan general Lysander suggested that the oracle was in fact referring to something far less obvious, a lame kingship caused by the pollution of the Heraklid bloodline as a result of Leotychides' illegitimacy. The result of this was that the state chose Agesilaus to be king.³²⁹ The question here is whether this Diopeithes was the same man as the one living in Athens at the start of the Peloponnesian war.

Connor cites entries in the Souda and the scholion to Aristophanes *Knights*, which suggest that Diopeithes left Athens on account of failing to uphold a law which he himself was responsible for establishing.³³⁰ If this is the case, it does provide a link which explains the presence of Diopeithes in both Athens and later Sparta, and as a result it does allow the conclusion that this was the same man.³³¹

Another point worth observing here is that Diopeithes is only referred to as a χρησμολόγος in the sources.³³² Therefore, perhaps the oracle concerning the lame kingship came from his own oracular collection, although due to this particular oracle being cited earlier in Spartan history, I find this idea unlikely.³³³ Regardless of his precise status as an independent diviner, we have seen from his activity in Athens that Diopeithes was able to

³²⁷ Plut. *Alc.* 23.

³²⁸ Xen. *Hell.* III:3.3.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Connor (1963) 116-117.

³³¹ See Bowden (2003) 268-269, who agrees that it is more likely that there was only one Diopeithes, but he does not consider Diopeithes to have been a religious specialist primarily.

³³² Flower (2008b) 124.

³³³ It is far more likely that the oracle came from the Spartans' own collection of oracles. For further discussion on this and oracular collections, see chapter I 28-30.

wield considerable political influence in Athens.³³⁴ Therefore, we know it was possible for independent diviners to perform other roles in addition to using their μαντική for the good of the city state.

Lampon was another independent diviner who reached a position of influence in Athens. His achievements must have been notable, in order for him to receive the reward of dining privileges. We know that he was an associate of Pericles, and Plutarch in his *Life of Pericles* provides an account in which we are told that in Pericles' youth Lampon competed with the philosopher Anaxagoras to provide an interpretation of the sacrifice of a ram's head with an abnormality. Anaxagoras was proven correct immediately in the fact that he demonstrated by dissecting the creature that there was an anatomical distortion in its appearance, but Lampon's prediction of Pericles' greatness was also proven later to be correct, as Pericles rose to become one of the most renowned Athenian statesmen of the fifth century B.C.³³⁵

Lampon seems to have held a variety of different responsibilities throughout his career, but it appears that he was always understood to be a μάντις primarily.³³⁶ Lampon was sent as a group of ten men to lead the founding expedition to Thurii.³³⁷ He was a signatory on the Peace of Nicias;³³⁸ surely a privilege not available to an unimportant man, and his relationship with Pericles would certainly have helped him to ascend to prominence within Athens.³³⁹

Hierocles was an independent diviner who lived around the same time as Lampon. He was sent to assist in the resettling of Oreus after the Euboean revolt was quelled in 446/445 B.C.³⁴⁰ Whether he was known primarily as a χρησμολόγος or a μάντις has been discussed previously,³⁴¹ but irrespective of his precise status as a diviner, it seems that the services which

³³⁴ For the reception of Diopetithes, see chapter V 179-180.

³³⁵ Plut. *Per.* 6. See also Oliver (1952a) 15 and Bloch (1963) 38.

³³⁶ For an opposing view of this, see Malkin (1987) 99.

³³⁷ For a detailed discussion of the Thurii foundation, see Ehrenberg (1948) 149-170.

³³⁸ Thuc. V:19 and V:24.

³³⁹ For a discussion of the reception of Lampon, see chapter V 169-170.

³⁴⁰ Bowden (2003) 226-7.

³⁴¹ See chapter I 23-24.

he provided to the Athenians were enough to merit the reward of dining privileges in the Prytaneion.³⁴² Diopeithes, Lampon and Hierocles are all named and ridiculed to a certain extent in the plays of Aristophanes: presumably this would not have happened if they had been men of insignificance. If nothing else, Aristophanes' Athenian audience would have needed to know who these individuals were in order to find his plays and the puns within them humorous.³⁴³

For the purposes of this chapter, arguably the most intriguing aspect of their roles within Athens were that both Lampon and Hierocles played prominent roles in the Athenian colonisation process. The act of founding a colony was of great importance in classical Greece and the procedure for doing so correctly is thought to have evolved from the colonisation age during the archaic period if not beforehand, where Corinth and Athens were the leading city states in establishing colonies to populate the coasts of Asia Minor, Sicily and Italy.³⁴⁴

The religious element of the colonisation process was essential, as it was very important for the gods to be in favour of the establishment of a colony. The colonists and mother-city wanted the gods to look favourably upon the new settlement and to help it to develop and flourish. The Delphic Oracle played a prominent role in this process, but once the founding party had departed for their new home, a μάντις was required to oversee the prescribed religious rites and to interpret omens as necessary throughout the colonisation process.³⁴⁵

vi). The role of independent diviners in colonisation:

The colonisation process was one of great importance to the ancient Greeks; it was the transition between mother-city and daughter-city, where those laying the foundations of a new colony were establishing themselves independently in a new region.³⁴⁶ The Greek

³⁴² For a discussion of the reception of Hierocles, see chapter I 23-24.

³⁴³ For a discussion of Diopeithes and Lampon in the plays of Aristophanes, see Hose (1940) 92-93.

³⁴⁴ For an overview of religion in colonisation, see Malkin (1987). For a general introduction to colonisation, Gwynn (1918) 88-123 remains an informative source. See also, Boardman (1999).

³⁴⁵ For an introduction to religion in colonisation, see Malkin (1987).

³⁴⁶ For more information on this time see Boardman (1999).

colonisation period of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. was a time of mass-Hellenic expansion across the ancient world, but we know that the ancient Greeks were still founding colonies into the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.³⁴⁷

There were many motivations for the founding of a colony; overpopulation, religious, economic and political incentives, to name but a few. The reasons behind founding a colony often varied within each city state and the procedure was different again if a military force was away on campaign and decided to found a city.³⁴⁸

Divination was an essential aspect of colonisation, and most city states and oikists were reluctant to embark upon their foundation journey without divine approval from an oracular centre. Herodotus provides us with an instance where this did not occur and the expedition was a failure.³⁴⁹ No doubt events such as this would have deterred city states from embarking upon what was considered an impious enterprise and this would have encouraged them to consult an oracle beforehand whenever possible.

There are several instances in the sources which inform us that the oracle of Apollo at Delphi was the most commonly consulted oracular centre at the outset, when a colonising venture was being considered by a city state.³⁵⁰ Yet what of the religious requirements once initial divine consent had been received? I have previously addressed the impracticalities of

³⁴⁷ Fortunately, Thucydides and Xenophon especially found it pertinent to record such things, which we shall explore in detail in this section. In addition, Aristophanes' play *The Birds* is based upon the founding of a colony.

³⁴⁸ For a discussion of motives for founding a colony, see Gwynn (1918) 88-98 and Dougherty (1993b) 178-180. For instances of colonisation on military campaigns, see Xen. *Anab.* V:6.15-32 and below 100-101 for Xenophon wishing to found a colony. See also Plut. *Per.* 26; Arr. III:1.5 and below 102-103 for the foundation of Alexandria in Egypt by Alexander the Great. See also Thuc. III:92.4 for the founding of Heraclea in Trachis, a colony established by the Spartans arguably for the sole purpose of gaining a religious and military advantage over the Athenians during the Peloponnesian war. For a discussion of this, see Gwynn (1918) 102; Hornblower (2011) 162-168.

³⁴⁹ Hdt V:42-48 for Dorieus leaving Sparta to found a colony without initially observing the appropriate divinatory practices. This is also discussed briefly by Diod. IV:23.3. See also Malkin (1987) 104-106 for a discussion of the refoundation of Messene by Epaminondas detailed in Paus. IV:26-27, where it seems that the Delphic oracle was not consulted, yet it seems that the new colony was established successfully. See also below 103-105.

³⁵⁰ See Apollod. *Lib.* II:7.6; Hdt. IV:151-159, V:43; Paus. X:10.6-8; Strab. VI:1-3 provide instances of Delphi being consulted before a colony was founded. Manto also left Delphi to settle in Claros in accordance with an oracle (Paus. VII:3.2). For an exploration of the role of Delphi in the colonisation process, see Pease (1917) 1-20 and Forrest (1957) 160-175.

consulting an oracular centre regularly.³⁵¹ These same problems would have been further compounded by the distance of a colony from an oracular centre, especially in those instances where the colonists were settling in another country. Thus it is clear that colonisation was another aspect of Greek life which required the expertise of an independent diviner.

The role of independent diviners in colonisation varies from myth to history, therefore in order to treat this section sensibly it seems prudent to briefly consider the role of the μάντις of myth in the founding of colonies. There is not much evidence to suggest that seers were always involved in the colonisation process in Greek myth, yet the Greek seer Mopsus, who famously defeated Calchas in a divination competition is credited with founding some colonies in Asia Minor.³⁵² Mopsus is associated with the founding of Aspendos and Phaselis in Pamphylia, after which he travelled into Cilicia and founded Mopsouhestia and Mallos, he was also accompanied in these foundation excursions by the seer Amphilochos.³⁵³ These foundations were said to have occurred a year before the fall of Troy.

Mopsus is also credited with founding the sanctuary of Apollo at Claros with his mother Manto.³⁵⁴ What is fascinating where Mopsus is concerned is that there is confirmation of his existence from Hittite and Cuneiform epigraphic evidence. Barnett detailed this discovery in his 1953 article and demonstrates how these inscriptions link Mopsus to their foundation.³⁵⁵ As with the ancestry of μάντις, the presence of this evidence indicates clearly the need for a colony to have a strong association with its oikist.³⁵⁶

From the accounts which we have describing colonisation in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. we know that a μάντις was employed by the city state or oikist concerned to accompany the colonisation party and to handle the specific sacrifices required in this process.³⁵⁷ The precise procedure of this appointment is unknown, and instances which we

³⁵¹ See 2, and 12-14 of introduction.

³⁵² Apollod. *Epit.* VI:2-5. See also above, 75 and Dillery (2005) 176-178.

³⁵³ See Burkert (1992) 52-53; Baldriga (1994) 35-71 and Boardman (1999) 36.

³⁵⁴ Paus. VII:3.2.; See also Barnett (1953) 142.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 140-143.

³⁵⁶ For more on the significance of the oikist, see Malkin (1987) 17-91.

³⁵⁷ See Jacoby (1949) 184.

have from Athens where μάντις were in the employ of politicians and generals to serve a divinatory purpose contain varied circumstances: therefore there is a lot of ambiguity surrounding the specifics of this. Pritchett provides a coherent summary of our knowledge concerning the selection of a μάντις:

‘We conclude that at Athens and in other city-states the μάντις was at times elected; at other times he was the religious adviser and attendant of the hegemon.’³⁵⁸

It is a shame that there is not more evidence on this, but at least despite not being fully aware of the specific procedure, we can confirm that independent diviners were employed for the purposes of accompanying colonisation expeditions in the classical period. It is fortunate that accounts have been preserved detailing a variety of colony foundations, which we can use to learn more about the role of independent diviners throughout this process.

The decision to send a colony to Thurii in 444/3 B.C.³⁵⁹ originated with the Athenians. According to Diodorus, the people of Sybaris appealed to both the Athenians and the Spartans, requesting assistance in their repatriation and for colonists to join them. The Athenians consented and invited colonists from other Greek city states to participate.³⁶⁰ The foundation of Thurii initially appears to have had a Pan-Hellenic purpose, with the simple idea of assisting the people of Sybaris and providing an opportunity for individuals within Greek city states to participate in a new enterprise, but there are the motives behind the Athenian leadership of this expedition to consider, and Pericles’ definition of Pan-Hellenism would most likely have included Athenian imperialism and expansion in the West.³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Pritchett (1979a) III:63.

³⁵⁹ See Ehrenberg (1948) 150 for a discussion of the correct date for the foundation.

³⁶⁰ Diod. Sic. XII:10.3-6. This is arguably one of Thucydides’ most famous omissions. Gomme (1945) I:369 suggests that Thucydides had written notes on it, but did not manage to include details of it in the final work, which in my opinion seems to be a rather unconvincing explanation. Therefore, our main source for this is Diod. Sic. XII:9-11 and details of the civil strife to later occur at Thurri are preserved in Aristot. *Pol.* V:1307a.

³⁶¹ See Gwynn (1918) 101-102; Ehrenberg (1948) 150, and more recently Hornblower (2011) 59 for further reading on this.

The account in Diodorus of the colonisation of Thurii is one of the more detailed examples available to us from the classical period.³⁶² It was a carefully prepared venture, primarily orchestrated by the Athenians, with notable names involved in the process; Herodotus himself is on the list of settlers. The Athenians had high hopes for the colony, yet within a decade there were disputes over which Greek state held the claim of mother-city over the settlement and who was to be considered the *oikist*. The result was that Thurii appealed to Delphi and had Apollo named as their official oikist, and subsequently cut their ties with Athens.³⁶³

Due to this dispute between Athens and Thurii we see a new term appear in Arisotphanes' *Clouds*, *Thouriomanteis*.³⁶⁴ From the definition found in the *Souda*, *Thouriomanteis* were said to be the independent diviners who were sent to Thurii with the original colony, rather than μάντεις who had come from Thurii.³⁶⁵ According to Diodorus the μάντις most actively involved in the colonisation process was the Athenian Lampon,³⁶⁶ Plutarch even refers to him as the sole oikist of the enterprise, but he is the only source to do so.³⁶⁷

From his mention in the sources Lampon appears to have been a leading political figure in Athens. Thucydides informs us that he was one of the first signatories of the Peace of Nikias and the Athenian-Spartan alliance in 421 B.C.³⁶⁸ and this also informs us that although he may have played a prominent founding role at Thurii, he still returned to Athens rather than remain there, although the reasons behind this and the precise date of his return are unknown.³⁶⁹

³⁶² Diod. Sic. XII:9-11.

³⁶³ Ibid. Malkin (1987) 97-101.

³⁶⁴ Aristoph. *Cl.* 331-332. See also Hose (1940) 92-93.

³⁶⁵ For discussions of *Thouriomanteis*, see Ehrenberg (1948) 164 and Malkin (1987) 98-99.

³⁶⁶ Diod. Sic. XII:10.4.

³⁶⁷ Plut. *Praec. Ger. Reip.* 812d; Ehrenberg (1948) 163-164.

³⁶⁸ Thuc. V:19 and V:24. See Malkin (1987) 99, who considers Lampon to have been 'a politician whose specialty was matters of religion', rather than the other way around. I see no reason as to why Lampon could not be treated as both, but if forced to distinguish I would consider Lampon to have been an independent diviner above all other roles, due to his talents in this area.

³⁶⁹ Graham (1971) 37.

Lampon is an example of an independent diviner who was able to perform his divinatory practices alongside fulfilling other roles within a Greek city state. He is certainly the most curious independent diviner of the classical period, as he is referred to by such an unusual range of terms.³⁷⁰ Not only was he considered to be an independent diviner, but also it seems that he was familiar with the workings of the Eleusinian mysteries, although he was not known to be a member.³⁷¹

The requirements of Lampon during the colonisation of Thurii are not preserved in great detail, but Ehrenberg acknowledges his importance.

‘It is evident that the activities of prophets such as Lampon were essential for the whole enterprise.’³⁷²

Ehrenberg considers Lampon to have been in charge of Delphi’s role in the colonisation at Thurii, although it is plain that if this had been the case, there would have been a conflict of interests, as Lampon would have been chiefly concerned with upholding the concept of Athenian imperialism, as expected by Pericles, for the duration of the expedition. It was not possible for him to maintain the interests of both parties.³⁷³ I find it far more likely that Lampon was appointed by the Athenian assembly, rather than by Delphi, and that he was sent to Delphi on behalf of Athens to receive permission to participate in the colonisation process and to ask for the foundation oracle.³⁷⁴

It is clear that Lampon was an independent diviner who was able to function successfully within a city state performing other roles in addition to the divinatory practices expected of him. The reason why I consider Lampon to be a seer above all else is because he is frequently referred to as one in a variety of sources.³⁷⁵ Because of this, I find it highly

³⁷⁰ See Malkin (1987) 98-99.

³⁷¹ Aristot. *Rhet.* III:18.1.

³⁷² Ehrenberg (1948) 164.

³⁷³ For a discussion of Lampon’s religious qualifications to participate in the colonisation at Thurii, see Ehrenberg (1948) 164-165.

³⁷⁴ Diod. Sic. XII:10.5-6. See Bowden (2003) 266 for evidence of independent diviners being employed by the Athenian Boule. See also Pease (1917) 1-20 for a discussion on the different attested formats of foundation oracles.

³⁷⁵ See chapter I 22.

unlikely that he was solely a statesman with an impressive knowledge of divinatory practices, as if this was the case, such as it was for individuals like Xenophon,³⁷⁶ then he would be referred to as such in the sources.

Due to the importance of divination in the classical period, I find it very unlikely that any ancient writer who considered himself to be some form of a historian would have referred to an individual as an independent diviner if they did not consider them to be one, as this would be considered both inaccurate and potentially impious. We know that seers were ridiculed, this is evident in Aristophanes and other playwrights, but they were still mocked in most instances as a result of performing the divinatory role expected of them, not solely for possessing knowledge of μαντική.³⁷⁷

Hierocles is another example of a religious specialist who received comic scrutiny in the works of Aristophanes.³⁷⁸ We are already aware that he was an independent diviner who played an active divinatory role in Athens during the fifth century B.C. Other than Aristophanes, the other contemporary evidence that we have for Hierocles comes from the ‘Chalcis’ decree,³⁷⁹ which informs us that Hierocles and three others were expected to carry out the sacrifices ‘from the oracles concerning Euboea’.³⁸⁰ Unfortunately it is difficult to determine which specific collection of oracles the inscription is referring to; whether the oracles concerning Euboea belonged to a state collection of oracles in Athens, or a collection belonging solely to Hierocles is unclear.³⁸¹

For the purposes of this chapter the most significant observation is that Hierocles was instructed to perform sacrifices as specified in a collection of oracles. This is worth noting for three reasons: primarily, this inscription details a χρησμολόγος being asked to perform divinatory rites as instructed by the Athenian Boule. Thus confirming that independent

³⁷⁶ For a discussion of Xenophon’s divinatory abilities, see chapter IV 158-159.

³⁷⁷ For example, Hierocles is mocked in Aristoph. *Peace* 1039-1110 for meddling in the sacrifices, even though it was the expectation for a μάντις to oversee if not perform them himself. See also Oliver (1952a) 10-14; Smith (1989) 140-158; Bowden (2003) 266-267; and Dillery (2005) 194-195.

³⁷⁸ Ibid. See chapter I 23-24 for the reception of Hierocles.

³⁷⁹ IG i³ 40. For a discussion of the correct date of the Chalcis decree, see Mattingly (1976) 39-40.

³⁸⁰ Bowden (2003) 266:48ff.

³⁸¹ For more on oracular collections, see chapter I 28-30.

diviners were employed to perform divinatory practices as necessary for city states, that the Boule was responsible for deciding upon which independent diviner would be hired to perform these rites, and that certain events occurred in which oracular collections had to be consulted before ritual practices could be performed, in order to provide some sort of solution or consolation.³⁸²

Secondly, it is intriguing that sacrifices were performed after consulting an oracular collection first, as the implication here is that there was not necessarily a standardised sacrificial procedure to follow, or in this instance of a founding of a colony at least. Alternatively, it is likely that the sacrificial procedure was dependent upon the oracular response, as both different circumstances and different oracles might have required alternative forms of sacrifice.³⁸³

Finally, an inscription instructing Hierocles to consult an oracular collection supports the premise that he was more of a χρησμολόγος than a μάντις.³⁸⁴

From these two occurrences from the fifth century B.C., a clear picture has emerged, demonstrating that from a divinatory perspective independent diviners were essential features of the colonisation process. This is emphasised even further when we look at colonies which were established without the expected consultation at Delphi. Despite the fact that the oracular consultation did not occur, the oikist was still required to fulfil all religious aspects of the foundation to the standard expected, and this was where an independent diviner was necessary.

Xenophon provides us with a detailed account of the preliminary stages of establishing a colony when on military campaign in the *Anabasis*.³⁸⁵ Whilst leading the ten thousand Greek mercenaries back to Greece after their defeat at the Battle of Cunaxa, Xenophon decided that it might be beneficial to Greece to found a city in Pontus. Without consulting his men he then

³⁸² For a discussion of the Chalcis decree, see Mattingly (1976) 39-40 and Bowden (2003) 266-267. See also Bowden (2005) 4-5 and Malkin (1987) 112 for an assessment of the ancient Greek need to conciliate the gods using divination.

³⁸³ For a recent discussion of the history of scholarship on sacrifice and ritual, see Naiden (2013a) 388-427.

³⁸⁴ See Flower (2008b) 60-62 for an alternative interpretation. For a full treatment of this, see chapter I 24.

³⁸⁵ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.15-32.

summoned the μάντις Silanus the Ambraciot to perform a preliminary sacrifice in order to determine whether the gods approved of the chosen site and he received a confirmatory response. However, Silanus wished to return to Greece rather than found a colony, therefore he reported this to the army and caused trouble among those who did not wish to settle in Pontus. As a result, an assembly was called and Xenophon was forced to abandon the idea.³⁸⁶

This episode is particularly informative, as it has contributed to our knowledge of the colonisation process. An important initial observation here is that once Xenophon decided that it was worth exploring the possibility of founding a colony, his first action was to send for Silanus the μάντις, even though it is clear from the way that events unfolded that it would have been more beneficial for Xenophon to have kept this initial enquiry to himself by performing the preliminary sacrifice alone. We know that he was most certainly capable of doing so.³⁸⁷ Flower suggests that Xenophon asked Silanus to perform the sacrifice due to a lack of confidence in his own ability,³⁸⁸ but I am more inclined to agree with Malkin's view on the importance of μαντική in colonisation.

'Religion expressed through mantike was a means of allaying such inevitable fears. At the same time, it would also contribute to the authority and leadership of the oikist.'³⁸⁹

Considering the above, I believe that instead of feeling incapable of performing the preliminary sacrifice, instead Xenophon needed a μάντις both to demonstrate officially the approval of the gods towards the enterprise and to cement his own position as the initial founder and oikist for when he presented his colonisation intentions to the Greek mercenary force. Therefore, if accepting this premise, the implication of this episode is that in order to start the colonisation process properly, in the absence of sending an enquiry to an oracular

³⁸⁶ For a treatment of this incident, see Malkin (1987) 102-104 and Flower (2008b) 193-194. For further reading on Silanus, see Kett (1966) 69-70 and Roth (1982) 282. See also Raphals (2013) 253-254.

³⁸⁷ See Xen. *Anab.* VI:1.23-25 for Xenophon performing his own sacrifice.

³⁸⁸ Flower (2008b) 193-194.

³⁸⁹ Malkin (1987) 92.

centre, a μάντις was required to initiate communication with the gods and obtain their approval of the enterprise.

It seems from this account that the initial enquiry was sufficient to begin the colonisation process officially. This explains the anger of the mercenaries towards Xenophon, although it should be noted that his response to the mercenaries was that he believed the sacrifice to be merely an initial enquiry as to whether it would be propitious to found a colony and thus discuss the idea, rather than to begin the process of founding a colony formally. The reaction of the mercenaries to this initial sacrifice demonstrates the importance of sacrifice in the colonisation process, as it implies that a preliminary step towards the foundation of a colony had been taken.³⁹⁰ However, Xenophon was no stranger to correct divinatory procedure, and it seems that he knew enough to ensure that the enterprise could either have been proceeded with or abandoned, depending upon how the mercenary force received the idea, without any impious repercussions.

This instance illustrates clearly the flexibility required of a historical μάντις. The main role of Silenus on this campaign was to provide interpretations of omens and to perform sacrifices, but as this was primarily a military expedition, the main expectation of Silenus was surely to perform these mantic responsibilities in a military capacity. This instance of a colonisation enquiry demonstrates how unpredictable the role of a μάντις was, and how μαντική was required for a wide range of occurrences, both within and outside of city states.

We are informed by Plutarch that Alexander the Great decided to found the city of Alexandria on the instigation of a dream.³⁹¹ In Arrian's account we are told that Alexander found the geographical position excellent for founding a colony, which is also confirmed in Plutarch.³⁹² Alexander marked the outline for the city himself and was then reassured of the success of the foundation by a significant bird omen, which the independent diviners present

³⁹⁰ For further discussion on this, see Malkin (1987) 103.

³⁹¹ Plut. *Alex.* 26. For more information on dream interpretation, see chapter IV 129-135.

³⁹² Arr. III:1.5; Plut. *Alex.* 26.

interpreted as meaning that Alexandria would develop into a thriving city, which would feed men from many nations.³⁹³

There are debates about whether Alexander consulted the Oracle of Zeus Ammon at Siwa before founding Alexandria, but there does not seem to be enough evidence to suggest that this was the case. The chronology points towards Alexander visiting Siwa after he laid the foundations for the city.³⁹⁴ Thus it seems clear that this was another instance where *μάντιες* were required to oversee the religious requirements of the foundation of a city in order to ensure divine approval in the absence of a preliminary enquiry made at an oracular centre.

Another instance where this occurred during the classical period is the re-foundation of Messene in 369 B.C. This was instigated by Epaminondas and the Boeotians a few years after the Spartan defeat at Leuktra in 371 B.C. The reason for and details of the re-foundation are recorded in significant detail in Pausanias.³⁹⁵ Epaminondas was already aiming to resettle the Messenians after their successful revolt from the Spartans, but he was struggling to locate a suitable site.

He was then instructed to resettle the Messenians by an old man in a vision. He was told that it was now suitable to find a site for the Messenians because the wrath of the Dioscuri against them had ceased. The location of the new site was then revealed to the Theban general Epiteles in a dream, who passed directions to the site on to Epaminondas.³⁹⁶ In this instance there was an obvious motivation for the Messenians to wish to found a colony and clear evidence of divine assistance in finding a location, which did not come from an oracular centre directly.³⁹⁷

The reasons for failing to consult Delphi concerning this particular foundation are unknown. Perhaps by the fourth century consultations at oracular centres were unnecessary

³⁹³ For more on this omen and its interpretation see Malkin (1989) 107-109. For an overview of the ancient city of Alexandria, see Bell (1927) 171-184.

³⁹⁴ See Welles (1962) 271-298; Malkin (1987) 107-109 and Flower (2008b) 187 for further discussion on this.

³⁹⁵ Paus. IV:26-27. See also Malkin (1987) 104-107.

³⁹⁶ Paus. IV:26.6-7.

³⁹⁷ Malkin (1987) 104.

when it came to initial colonisation enquiries, or this may not have been regular practice for the Boeotians. They do not seem to have led many foundation expeditions in comparison to the Athenians and Corinthians in particular. Regardless of the reasons, circumventing Delphi did not mean that the expected divinatory practices could be overlooked.

Pausanias tells us that Epaminondas was heavily drawn to the oracles of Bakis, although whether he had his own oracular collection is unknown. It is fortunate that Pausanias was able to cite a specific oracle of Bakis, pertaining to Messenian freedom after the fall of Sparta.

‘καὶ τότε δὴ Σπάρτης μὲν ἀπ’ ἀγλαὸν ἄνθος ὀλεῖται,

Μεσσήνη δ’ αὖτις οἰκίσηται ἤματα πάντα.’

‘When the strong-coloured flower of Sparta will wither,

Messene will be peopled once again and for always.’³⁹⁸

Epaminondas then found a spot that he deemed to be the most suitable for the foundation and then asked the μάντιες present to inquire of the gods whether this was a favourable location on which to found a new city. Once he had received affirmation from the sacrifices, Epaminondas arranged for the foundations to be laid.³⁹⁹

Pausanias then provides a detailed account of the ritual procedures of the first few days of a foundation.⁴⁰⁰

‘ὥς δὲ ἐγγόνει τὰ πάντα ἐν ἐτοίμῳ, τὸ ἐντεῦθεν—ἱερεῖα γὰρ παρεῖχον οἱ Ἀρκάδες—αὐτὸς μὲν Ἐπαμινώνδας καὶ οἱ Θηβαῖοι Διονύσῳ καὶ Απόλλωνι ἔθνον Ἴσμηνίῳ τὸν νομιζόμενον τρόπον, Ἀργεῖοι δὲ τῇ τε Ἥρᾳ τῇ Ἀργείᾳ καὶ Νεμείῳ Δίῳ, Μεσσήνιοι δὲ Δίῳ τε Ἰθωμάτῳ καὶ Διοσκούροις, οἱ δὲ σφισιν ἱερεῖς θεαῖς ταῖς Μεγάλαις καὶ Καύκωνι. ἐπεκαλοῦντο δὲ ἐν κοινῷ καὶ ἡρώας σφισιν ἐπανήκειν συνοίκους, Μεσσήνην μὲν τὴν Τριόπα μάλιστα, ἐπὶ ταύτῃ δὲ Εὐρυτον καὶ Ἀφαρέα τε καὶ τοὺς παῖδας,

³⁹⁸ Paus. IV:27.4-5, tr. Levi.

³⁹⁹ Paus. IV:27.5; Pease (1917) 5 n.4.

⁴⁰⁰ Paus. IV:26.6-7.

παρὰ δὲ Ἡρακλειδῶν Κρεσφόντην τε καὶ Αἴπυτον: πλείστη δὲ καὶ παρὰ πάντων ἀνάκλησις ἐγένετο Ἀριστομένους.’

‘When everything was ready then the Arkadians produced victims, and Epaminondas and his Thebans sacrificed to Dionysos and Ismenian Apollo in their traditional style, and the Argives to Hera of Argos and Nemean Zeus, the Messenians to Zeus of Ithome and the Dioskouroi, and their priests to the Great Goddess and to Kaukon. Then they called out together to the divine heroes to return and live with them, particularly to Triopas’s daughter Messene, and Eurytos and Aphareus and their children, and to Kresphontes and Aipytos of the children of Herakles. But the greatest and most universal cry was to Aristomenes.’⁴⁰¹

In the above passage Pausanias informs us that the members of each city state present sacrificed to various deities in the accustomed manner, thus confirming that each city state sacrificed to a different deity or different form of the same deity, e.g. the Argives to Nemean Zeus and the Messenians to Zeus of Ithome. This confirms that at the very least this practice occurred when founding a colony. In addition, this passage demonstrates that there was an expected method of sacrifice that was typical of this stage of the foundation of a colony. Thus confirming that there was an established procedure by the fourth century at least.⁴⁰²

This passage has also verified the presence of μάνταις and we can see from the examples that we have already explored from the classical period that divination was an expected and essential aspect of the procedure for founding a colony. Independent diviners were most certainly required to ensure the accurate implementation of divinatory procedures and to bridge the gap between the mortal and divine realms.

Malkin compares the preliminary role of historical independent diviners in colonisation as similar to that of their role in battle.⁴⁰³ Arguably the most important task for a μάντις throughout this process was to provide constant reassurance that the gods favoured the decision to found a colony, whether that be through performing sacrifices, interpreting omens

⁴⁰¹ Paus. IV:27.6, tr. Levi.

⁴⁰² Ibid. See also Burkert (1983) 1-12.

⁴⁰³ Malkin (1987) 92.

or by consulting oracular collections. Once employed the μάντις performed the preliminary sacrifices which were often implemented in the mother-city and then the μάντις would sacrifice again once the site had been chosen; these rites were necessary to provide affirmation and to allay concerns.⁴⁰⁴

In terms of the role of an independent diviner in colonisation, it is clear that in Athens at least during the fifth century B.C. there was a requirement for a religious official to be involved in the foundation of any colony, working directly for the oikist. It seems likely that the same independent diviner was required for the entire process, i.e. to perform the initial sacrifice in the mother-city, to then depart with the oikist and to complete the sacrifices required at the other end once the location of the colony had been determined.⁴⁰⁵

So what of a μάντις once the colony had been established? It does not seem that there was a requirement for them to stay. Hierocles and Lampon returned from their colonies to Athens at some point, as it is clear that they utilised their dining privileges in the Prytaneion, and we know that Lampon especially had an active political career in Athens after participating in the foundation of Thurii.⁴⁰⁶ Therefore it can be concluded that the role of independent diviners in colonisation was only for the foundation of a colony and perhaps for an agreed period of time once the city had been formally established. One can naturally assume that after this other officials would have been elected to oversee the religious running of the city and that subsequently a μάντις was free to continue on to their next employment or to return to the city state.

vii). Changes in the role between myth and the classical period:

There is a definite distinction between what was expected of historical independent diviners in comparison to their epic predecessors. This is perhaps due to a gradual change in what mantic ability actually consisted of. Divine inspiration features far more in sources

⁴⁰⁴ See IG I³ 46 for a decree concerning the sacrifice for favourable omens conducted in the mother-city. See also Graham (1971) 228 and Malkin (1987) 109-111.

⁴⁰⁵ See Oliver (1952a) 10-17.

⁴⁰⁶ See above 97.

referring to earlier μάντεις of myth rather than to those of history. The μάντεις of history were able to determine the will of the gods through the interpretation of entrails, dreams and omens; in contrast to this there are only a handful of instances in the sources in which historical μάντεις spoke under direct divine influence.⁴⁰⁷ In agreement with this contrast, the individual μάντεις who are mentioned in epic literature, such as Calchas, do not read entrails.⁴⁰⁸ This particular τέχνη evolved gradually to become a regular method of μαντική and was introduced from the Middle East.⁴⁰⁹

The most evident change in the role of independent diviners in myth when compared with those of the classical period is that aspects of the process of their employment differed within city states. These circumstances changed as a result of the evolution of democracy in ancient Greece. In addition, as μαντική became more achievable through learning, independent diviners were no longer required to be of the highest social status themselves.⁴¹⁰

Mythic seers were most often working in the employment of a king or hero, such as Calchas in the service of Agamemnon, but with the rise of democracy the process of employing independent diviners evolved, as seers were no longer solely hired by individuals or employed for years in the continued service of kings and tyrants.

This is not to say that independent diviners were not employed by individuals during the classical period, we know that this was the case, but the evolution of the city state resulted in the employment of seers through assemblies either for consultation within the city state or for when they were assigned to join expeditions, both military and for the founding of colonies.⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁷ See the next chapter for a treatment of the different methods of divination practised by independent diviners. For inspired divination, see Bonnechere (2010a) 153-155.

⁴⁰⁸ For a discussion of the presentation of Calchas' μαντική in Homer, see Hanson (2013) 1-20.

⁴⁰⁹ For the origins of extispicy and hepatoscopy, see Burkert (1992) 46-53 and Flower (2008b) 27 and 44. See chapter IV 136-148 for a full treatment of these divinatory methods.

⁴¹⁰⁴¹⁰ Naturally those members of mantic families such as a Melampodidae could still claim royal descent, and the independent diviners newer to the field were still well educated individuals, but we do not have the same picture of seers that we are presented with in epic literature. See Burkert (1985b) 117 and Bremmer (1996) 105.

⁴¹¹ See above 100.

Where the foundation of colonies is concerned, by the classical period there was a far more regimented procedure, within which independent diviners featured heavily as overseers of divine communication, once initial permission to found a colony had been sought and granted. As Malkin states:

‘The responsibility for divination, as we have seen, belonged to the oikist, but the performance of the actual rites were probably delegated by him to his mantis.’⁴¹²

This shared responsibility echoes what has already been discussed in the introduction to this thesis. The idea of independent diviners and divination assisting in making important decisions is a well-established concept in our understanding of the role of independent diviners in the ancient Greek world, and the role of a seer during the founding of a colony supports this further.⁴¹³

It is also clear that excellent benefits were awarded to successful seers and the instances which we have seen so far from both myth and the classical period demonstrate that for the most part the independent diviners that we are informed of in the sources lived comfortable and affluent lives. Bowden’s view on the importance of independent diviners in Athens at least during the classical period is as follows:

‘Soothsayers and oracle-interpreters were sometimes given public honours by the city of Athens. They were not marginal members of Athenian political life, courted by the credulous; rather, they took part in debates in the assembly, and they were listened to with respect as experts in their subject.’⁴¹⁴

In conclusion, we can see from the examples explored in this chapter that both the role and the expectations of independent diviners augmented throughout the fifth and fourth

⁴¹² Malkin (1987) 112.

⁴¹³ This concept where the founding of a colony is concerned is further endorsed by Garland (2014) 47.

⁴¹⁴ Bowden (2005) 150.

centuries, but the concept of divine inspiration dwindled as Greek civilisation thrived. As writing flourished, so did written records of divination, which made the τέχνη more available to amateurs.⁴¹⁵ Despite this, it seems that there was still ample demand for independent diviners in the classical period and any negative treatment of seers does not seem to have affected their employment prospects drastically when compared to the accounts that we have recording seers of myth.⁴¹⁶ Divination itself was still very much sought-after, and although the methods of divine communication began to vary towards the end of the classical period, religious specialists were still required to provide interpretations.

It seems that the role of independent diviners in the archaic period was similar if not the same as independent diviners in the classical period and it is highly likely that this is due to later writers recording these events and detailing the actions of seers as they would expect them to behave in terms of methods of divination, just like the independent diviners of their time. This will be treated in more detail in the next chapter, as each method of divination requires careful scrutiny.

⁴¹⁵ See chapter I 28-30 for further discussion on written oracles.

⁴¹⁶ For the reception of seers, see chapter V, for the decline of independent diviners, see the conclusion of this thesis 204-205.

Chapter IV

Receiving and interpreting the message

From what we have seen so far of the need for and the role of independent diviners during the classical period, it is clear that they were an essential resource for both individuals and city states to consult whenever an important decision needed to be made, as they were the facilitators of divine communication. The outcomes of these actions were affected heavily by the results and interpretations of divination, as they dictated the course of action which the enquirer should take. Consequently, the aptitude of an independent diviner was of the utmost importance, as the decisions which they were consulted about were considered to have been of great significance.⁴¹⁷

On a military campaign especially it was essential for an independent diviner to be accurate. Primarily and more obviously, because if that particular specialist was mistaken in their interpretation this would have resulted most likely in defeat of the army and perhaps death for the seer in question! Moreover, if an independent diviner made correct predictions and performed well during service this would no doubt have boded well in terms of continuing or securing future employment and gaining further renown. A μάντις was expected to accompany an army for the duration of a military campaign, as there was a requirement to perform sacrifices regularly both on and off the battlefield, as well as a need for a μάντις to interpret any unexpected omens which might occur along the way.⁴¹⁸

But what of the methods of divination used by independent diviners in order to obtain this knowledge? The various methods which they used will be explored in detail throughout this chapter with examples of their application taken from the ancient literature, in order to understand further how divine communication was enabled and interpreted by independent diviners. This will help us to place seers within their correct context more accurately, as one

⁴¹⁷ For more on the contribution of independent diviners to the decision making process, see 14-16 of the introduction.

⁴¹⁸ For further reading on religious scruples, particularly in ancient warfare, see also Goodman and Holladay (1986) 151-171.

cannot hope to understand their purpose without first exploring the methods of divination that they used; the concept of divine communication was⁴¹⁹ what appealed to enquirers in the first place.

Μαντική

Before delving into further detail it seems prudent to consider what exactly μαντική was believed to consist of for an independent diviner of the classical period. What did an employer expect an independent diviner to be able to do?⁴²⁰ Ornithomancy, cledonomancy, oneiromancy and extispicy were the main methods of divination utilised by a μάντις in the classical period. Below is a treatment of how each method of divination was practised.

i). Ornithomancy:

Two studies on birds in ancient Greece remain invaluable to this area of scholarship. The work of Pollard⁴²¹ and Thompson⁴²² highlights the many breeds of birds which we are presented with in the ancient texts and examines the role that early ornithology played in everyday life in ancient Greece.⁴²³

Ornithomancy is the study of bird divination, in which the movements and behaviour of birds is scrutinised and interpreted.⁴²⁴ It has a long history of practice in ancient Greece and the interpretation of avian omens (augury) was also adopted and developed further by the Romans.⁴²⁵ The belief that birds were the messengers of the gods' divine will is traceable back to myth and Homer especially often describes instances in which the gods sent messages to mortals using birds as agents.⁴²⁶ For example, in Book VIII of the *Iliad*, Zeus sent an eagle

⁴¹⁹ See 12-14 of the introduction to this thesis for a treatment of belief and the need to communicate in ancient Greece.

⁴²⁰ For a treatment of the etymology of μαντική, see chapter I 19 and Flower (2008b) 84.

⁴²¹ (1977).

⁴²² (1936).

⁴²³ More recent works treating ornithomancy include Bloch (1984) 19-22; Dillon (1996) 99-121; Collins (2002) 17-41 and Johansson (2012).

⁴²⁴ See Roth (1982) 91-98 for an informative introduction to ornithomancy.

⁴²⁵ For more on Roman augury, see Bouché-Leclercq (1879) I:136.

⁴²⁶ Roth (1982) 89 records twelve instances.

clutching a fawn in its talons to the Greeks, which the bird dropped by the altar of Zeus before the Greek force to encourage them to engage fiercely in battle.⁴²⁷

The basic premise of Greek ornithomancy is that for the most part, any aerial activity involving movements on or to the right-hand side of the observer was considered propitious, whilst any opposite occurrence involving the left-hand side was considered to be less fortunate. There are several examples of these left-side, right-side bird omens in Homer especially.⁴²⁸ In Book X of the *Iliad* Odysseus observed a heron on his right-hand side, which had been sent to him by Athene to reassure him of the success of that particular endeavour.⁴²⁹

In contrast to this there is an instance in Book XII of the *Iliad* of an unpropitious bird omen, in which the Trojan force observed an eagle fighting with a snake in its talons on their left-hand side. This was a recognisable message from Zeus, which spelled disaster for the Trojan force.⁴³⁰ These omens were usually clear signals which were sent directly from the gods to inform those present of whether their undertaking would be successful or not. Another example from the *Iliad* is when Zeus sent an eagle to Priam in response to his prayer for reassurance, to encourage him to continue on his mission to retrieve Hector's body from Achilles. The eagle appeared on the right-hand side and darted across the city, providing comfort and conformation to those present and to Priam himself that he would be safe and well-received by Achilles.⁴³¹

Written records of bird omens are by no means restricted to Homer and epic. Many ancient sources felt it necessary to preserve instances of how ornithomancy affected the course of historical events and the lives of famous individuals. In Diodorus Siculus we are given an account of the Third Sacred War, within which we are informed that Philomelus and the

⁴²⁷ Hom. *Il.* VIII:245-53.

⁴²⁸ See also Hom. *Il.* XIII:821-25 for an eagle on the right-hand side of the Greek force and Hom. *Od.* XV:525-35; XX:235-250 for other examples. See Aesch. *Per.* 200-212 for an eagle consumed by a falcon on its way to the altar of Apollo. See Xen. *Anab.* VI:5.1-3 for Arexion the Parrhasian spotting an eagle in a fortuitous position after receiving favourable results from a sacrifice. See Xen. *Cyrop.* II.1-3 for an eagle appearing on the right-hand side when Cyrus entered Persia. In this particular work it is both interesting and important that Xenophon felt it necessary to include a bird omen here, as this is a pseudo-historical account.

⁴²⁹ Hom. *Il.* X:270-300. See below 116 for further discussion of this omen.

⁴³⁰ Hom. *Il.* X:265-85; XII:200-10. These particular instances will be scrutinised in more detail below.

⁴³¹ Hom. *Il.* XXIV:299-325.

Phocians observed an eagle preying on the pigeons within the temple precincts of the Delphic Oracle, just after Philomelus had consulted the Pythia. This was interpreted by those present to indicate that Philomelus and the Phocians would control the affairs at Delphi, consequently this positive omen along with the response from the Pythia were perceived by the Phocians to further endorse their decision to seize the oracular centre.⁴³²

Plutarch is another author who placed emphasis on ornithomancy in his works. In his *Life of Alexander* there is the instance where a variety of birds descended whilst Alexander's men were outlining the foundations of Alexandria with barley meal and the birds consumed every crumb. Alexander was most perturbed by the portent, but he was assured by the seers present that this was a good omen, as it meant that the city would be a place to nurture a variety of men from all nations.⁴³³

Another bird omen from this particular life occurred during battle, where Aristander the seer observed an eagle flying above the head of Alexander and moving swiftly in the direction of the enemy lines. Aristander ensured that Alexander's ranks were made aware of this positive sign and with heightened courage they successfully routed their opposition.⁴³⁴

Before the battle of Salamis, Plutarch informs us in his *Life of Themistokles* that he knew of a story which stated that while Themistokles was speaking to rouse the Greek forces to fight the Persians at Salamis, in order to settle the debate suggesting that they withdraw from Salamis to defend the Isthmus, the Greek force observed an owl, which was flying through the fleet from the right-hand side and then alighted upon the rigging of Themistokles' ship. On observing the omen those present were persuaded by both the portent and Themistokles' words and so they returned to their ships to prepare for battle.⁴³⁵

It seems clear from this particular account that those present were persuaded not just by the fact that the bird flew from the right-hand side across the fleet (which we understand

⁴³² Diod. Sic. XVI:27.2. For further discussion of this incident, see Hornblower (2011) 275-277.

⁴³³ Arr. III:1.5; Plut. *Alex.* 26. See also chapter III 102-103 and Malkin (1989) 107-109 for a discussion of this omen in relation to the founding of Alexandria.

⁴³⁴ Plut. *Alex.* 33.

⁴³⁵ Plut. *Them.* 12. See Collins (2002) 40 for further discussion on this passage.

to have been a fortunate omen), but it must also be emphasised that the observers would have noted that the breed of bird was an owl. Accordingly, this was a clear sign that Athene was on the side of her patron city in this particular debate and it was no possible to ignore such an obvious omen.

From these instances and others, it is evident from the preservation of divine portents in historical and literary accounts from or concerning the classical period that ornithomancy remained an important aspect of divination and one can conclude that omens of this variety must have influenced the decision making process of the ancient Greeks quite significantly.⁴³⁶

A further elaboration on the interpretations of ornithomancy is explained in Pollard, who describes sixth century B.C. evidence from Ephesus that is believed to be a fragmented record of interpretations of bird omens. The text states:

‘Line of flight from right to left. If the bird disappeared from sight the omen is favourable; but if it raised its left wing and then soared and disappeared the omen is ill. Line of flight from left to right. If it disappeared on a straight course it is an ill omen; but if it raised its right wing and then soared and disappeared the omen is good.’⁴³⁷

This fragment places clear emphasis on the importance of cohesive interpretations of bird omens. In addition, it confirms that for the ancient Greeks at least, most actions originating from the right-hand side were considered fortunate, in contrast to any movements originating from the left-hand side, which were deemed inauspicious. This is a very useful piece of evidence as there is little written record preserved on the specifics of the interpretative process of ornithomancy and few details available of the various possible interpretations, which were gleaned from avian behaviour.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁶ For a treatment of decision making in ancient Greece, see Meyer (2002) and 14-16 of the introduction to this thesis.

⁴³⁷ Pollard (1977) 121. For a more recent discussion of this passage, see also Collins (2008a) 28-29.

⁴³⁸ See Plat. *Laws* 4.717a-b, where Plato refers to the ‘Even’ and ‘Left’ sides as assigned honours to the gods of the underworld, rather than the Olympians, as these were deemed far less fortunate in comparison to their ‘Odd’ and ‘Right’ counterparts. For books on divination, see Flower (2008b) 52-53; Pritchett (1979a) III:73.

Another important aspect of ornithomancy which required interpretation was a need to recognise the type of bird which appeared, as this also needed to be taken into consideration. The eagle was associated with Zeus, the owl with Athene and the swan and falcon with Apollo, and this association aided the observer if they were attempting to discern which deity was sending them a message.⁴³⁹

As many of these associations appear to have been common knowledge, it was not always necessary for Homer to name the deity involved on each occasion that a bird omen was observed, as the breed of bird itself was a sufficient indicator. However, it was not solely these breeds of bird which appeared as agents of each god's divine will. An example of this is from Book X of the *Iliad*, where Athene sent a heron to Odysseus, rather than a customary owl.

‘τοῖσι δὲ δεξιὸν ἦκεν ἐρωδιὸν ἐγγυς ὁδοῖο
Παλλὰς Ἀθηναίη· τοὶ δ’ οὐκ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσι
νύκτα δι’ ὀρφναίην, ἀλλὰ κλάγξαντος ἄκουσαν.
χαῖρε δὲ τῷ ὄρνιθ’ Ὀδυσσεύς, ἠρᾶτο δ’ Ἀθήνη.’

‘And Pallas Athene sent them a heron on the right close to the path. Their eyes could not see it in the darkness of the night, but they heard its cry. Odysseus was delighted at the omen of the bird, and prayed to Athene.’⁴⁴⁰

It was clear to Odysseus, purely from the favourable position of the bird on the right-hand side of his path, that the message was from a supporter of his cause, and it was sensible for him to discern from this that the deity responsible was his patron goddess Athene, as he had just spoken to her in prayer for protection whilst on his night time excursion.

It is evident from this and other occasions that independent diviners were not always required to interpret bird omens. Bird omens would have been so commonplace that it would

⁴³⁹ Pollard (1977) 16.

⁴⁴⁰ Hom. *Il.* X:270-300, tr. Hammond.

have been difficult for enquirers to find an independent diviner to provide an interpretation on every occasion that a bird omen was witnessed.

Therefore, interpreting ornithomancy was not solely restricted to an independent diviner. An important example of this occurs in the *Odyssey* when an eagle appeared, flying by on the right, with a white goose in its talons from the yard. Helen of Troy interpreted this omen to signify that Odysseus too would return from afar and take vengeance upon the suitors in his home.⁴⁴¹ This analysis was accepted by those present without challenge and so it is apparent from this passage that it was perfectly acceptable for those without μαντική to infer their own conclusions from bird omens, and perhaps more interestingly, this passage also demonstrates that this acceptance of ‘layman practice’ was not solely restricted to men.⁴⁴²

A difficulty which army commanders undoubtedly faced with ornithomancy as a τέχνη was that due to the frequency of bird omens, it was highly likely that many of the soldiers possessed some sort of understanding of how to interpret them. Therefore, it is without doubt that there would have been instances where someone or several individuals in the main body of the army would have recognised a bad omen and inevitably this would have affected morale and performance on military campaigns.

A Homeric example of this is found in Book XII of the *Iliad* when an eagle flew over the left-hand side of the Trojan force carrying a large snake in its talons. The struggling snake then attacked its captor and the eagle dropped it in the midst of the Trojan ranks. This was a clear sign to the Trojans that their venture against the Achaeans was doomed to fail, and this was recognised by both the Trojan force and the soothsayer Polydamos. Sure enough the Trojans enjoyed brief success driving the Achaeans back to their ships, but they were eventually routed and pursued back to Troy.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Hom. *Od.* XVI:160-175. See Dietrich (1990) 161 for a discussion of this omen.

⁴⁴² It appears that Helen was merely providing an interpretation of an obvious omen, but the fact that her interpretation was accepted by those present was informative. There were female μάντις in the ancient world, but they were more of a rarity. See Graf (1984) 245-54; Hupfloher (2005) 77-91 and Flower (2008b) 211-239 for further reading.

⁴⁴³ Hom. *Il.* XII:200-230. See also, Johansson (2012) 107-115 for a detailed analysis of this portent.

Undoubtedly the realisation that the gods were not in support of their venture would have had a negative impact upon the morale of the Trojan force and their performance in battle against the Achaeans would most certainly have been affected by this. Therefore, if Hector was unwilling to take heed of the omen in terms of tactics, he would still have been forced to acknowledge its effect on the Trojan force and so he would have needed to motivate the soldiers in some way in order to combat the negative effect of the inauspicious omen on the morale of the army. This is where an alternative, more positive interpretation should have been suggested by Hector or Polydamas, as this could have made a significant difference to the Trojans' performance in battle.⁴⁴⁴

An opposite instance of this has already been observed in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* and in that particular account it is clear that the sight of the eagle swooping towards the enemy cheered Alexander's force and filled them with courage to succeed in battle. Naturally Aristander must have been well aware of the merits of a good omen and took great pains to ensure that knowledge of its existence had spread amongst the Macedonian force before they engaged the enemy.⁴⁴⁵ This passage confirms clearly that ornithomancy was a very important factor to consider during a military campaign because of its effect on army morale.

Aristophanes' *Birds* is a comedy which provides us with a useful insight into ancient Greek opinions and perceptions of birds. The fact that Aristophanes was able to describe so many different varieties of bird and assign to them funny attributes which reflect the behaviour of each species demonstrates that Athenian knowledge (at the very least) of birds was quite thorough.⁴⁴⁶

It appears that it was common knowledge in the ancient Greek world that the migration patterns of birds were indicative of changes in season and weather. In addition, it also seems to have been understood that birds had a deeper sensitivity than humans when it

⁴⁴⁴ Aristander of Telmessus was renowned for his talents in interpreting any variety of omen and he was able to turn omens which had clear negative meanings into successful positive interpretations. This saved army morale on numerous occasions whilst Alexander was on campaign in Asia. Flower (2008b) 179-180.

⁴⁴⁵ Plut. *Alex.* 33. Flower (2008b) 180.

⁴⁴⁶ Aristoph. *Birds* 227-305.

came to impending weather changes.⁴⁴⁷ This means that birds were already observed and identified by the ancient Greeks before ornithomancy is even taken into consideration, even more so in the case of those individuals with maritime or agricultural professions. As a result of this we know that it may well have been common practice for individuals without μάντική to interpret bird behaviour, but this was not always with divination in mind. In addition, this does not mean that when it came to ornithomancy, a μάντις was not required at all.

A historical instance preserved in Xenophon supports this. There is an occasion in the *Anabasis* in which Xenophon recalled observing a screaming eagle sitting on his right-hand side when he was on his way to Ephesus to meet Cyrus. The μάντις present interpreted this omen as advising him not to seek the command of the army of the Ten Thousand, even if offered it. Xenophon accepted the interpretation provided by the μάντις and performed a sacrifice to thank the god for presenting him with this advice. As the bearer of the omen was an eagle it seems sensible to discern that Xenophon would have concluded that Zeus was the deity responsible for sending the omen to him.⁴⁴⁸

The fact that in this passage it seems that Xenophon was unable to interpret the meaning of this particular omen himself emphasises the importance of having a μάντις present on such occasions, especially as we know that Xenophon considered himself to be a man fairly well acquainted with matters of divination, in order that he might not rely solely upon a μάντις for all decisions.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, this instance clearly demonstrates that a working knowledge of divination was not always sufficient, as without a μάντις one was ill equipped to tackle all unexpected omens which might occur during an expedition. If nothing else, the presence of an independent diviner would have provided the reassurance that the omen had been interpreted correctly.

Ornithomancy was a demanding form of divination in the fact that the sudden appearance, flight patterns and behavioural habits of any particular species of bird could not

⁴⁴⁷ The work of Streby et al. proves a scientific link, which is perfectly applicable to birds in the ancient Greek world. Streby et al. (2015) 98-102.

⁴⁴⁸ Xen. *Anab.* VI:1.23-25. See also, Collins (2002) 40-41.

⁴⁴⁹ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29.

be predicted remotely. An omen of this kind could occur at any time, in any place, and an independent diviner was expected to recognise all species of bird and to be able to interpret bird behaviour instantly. This would have required some substantial training.

There is an interesting passage in Sophocles' *Antigone* in which the seer Teiresias describes to Creon the bad omen and the resulting unpropitious sacrifice that he witnessed. Putting aside the omen itself and Teiresias' interpretation for the moment, the vital information from this passage is that Teiresias observed this omen from a seat where he observes the signs and flights of birds:

‘εἰς γὰρ παλαιὸν θᾶκον ὀρνιθοσκόπον ἴζων, ἔν’ ἣν μοι παντὸς οἰωνοῦ λιμήν.’

‘At my seat of divination, where I sit,

These many years to read the signs of heaven.’⁴⁵⁰

This is significant information, because it suggests that more locally based independent diviners may well have had designated locations from which they were able to identify, observe and interpret the behaviour of birds. This seems logical because undoubtedly at some point whilst learning how to practise the τέχνη it would have been necessary for an independent diviner to learn how to recognise species of birds both visually and aurally.

In order to do this successfully, a seer would have needed somewhere secluded to observe birds in their natural habitat, in order to study them undisturbed. As there is so little evidence preserved in this area, any mention found in the ancient sources which might indicate that this was truly the case is invaluable.

The knowledge that we have obtained from the sources about the art of ornithomancy provides an important insight into this method of divination. The main difficulty that we face is that when it comes to the literary works detailing events attributed to Greek myth, there is little way of knowing whether these avian omens truly occurred or whether they were post-

⁴⁵⁰ Soph. *Ant.* 999-1000, tr. Watling.

eventum or creative additions, as the author might have wished to add more of a divine element to the course of events in order to demonstrate divine opinion of the behaviour of the protagonist.

Then again, even if there is a debate over the authenticity of a recorded omen, the information contained within the sources about the actual process of observation and interpretation still provides a useful glimpse into how ornithomancy was practised, or at least how it was considered to have been practised by the author, and it is perfectly sensible to presume that these practices in literature would have had at the very least some basis in fact. Therefore, it seems to be a waste of time to get too embroiled in debates over the authenticity of oracles and portents; instead we should focus on what these examples reveal to us about ancient Greek beliefs and attitudes.⁴⁵¹

When it comes to scrutinising the works of the fifth century B.C. dramatists it is sensible to consider that they might have used their knowledge of historical seers as a foundation when developing the character traits of their seers from myth. Is the Teiresias of Euripides and Sophocles modelled on a fifth century B.C. μάντις or is he developed solely from the authors' knowledge of seers from myth preserved in oral tradition?

This is an important question, as Teiresias is portrayed as a strong character, who informs those present of what he knows exactly and often without any kind of formal consultation (in contrast to the practices of a historical μάντις). In terms of how his character is presented in the texts, he is portrayed to have little or no regard for authority and perhaps there are parallels between this behaviour and the personality traits of historical independent diviners.⁴⁵²

I have previously discussed the general evolution of independent diviners and the expectations of the enquirer with regards to the capabilities of the μάντις of myth in

⁴⁵¹ See Henrichs (2003a) 207-266 and (2003b) 38-58 for further reading on recording religion and oracles. See also, Baumgarten (1998) 15-69.

⁴⁵² His argument with Creon demonstrates clearly that he is not afraid to speak his mind to kings. Soph. *Antigone* (988-1091). See Ugolini (1991) 18 for a discussion of this passage. Teiresias features in the following ancient works: Eur. *Ba.*; Eur. *Phoen.*; Pind. *I.*; Pind. *N.*; Soph. *Ant.*; Soph. *OT*. For further reading on Teiresias, see Brisson (1988).

comparison to their historical counterparts.⁴⁵³ Yet for the purposes of ornithomancy especially, this is worth exploring further.

Primarily, it seems clear from our knowledge of μάντεις from myth that they possessed a closer link to the gods. This is due to the fact that their mantic abilities were connected more directly with the gods as many of them had their abilities bestowed on them directly by one deity or another, rather than by inheriting the ability or acquiring it by some other means, such as simply learning the τέχνη.⁴⁵⁴ In addition, later messages for historical μάντεις from the gods appear to have been sent through more varied agents, which then required complex interpretation, such as sacrificial entrails with abnormalities.⁴⁵⁵

Furthermore, the acquisition of μαντική for historical μάντεις was far less extraordinary in comparison to the μάντεις of myth and epic. A clear example of these differences can be seen in ornithomancy. Famous seers from myth were credited with understanding birdsong; they did more than just recognise the bird by its call and interpret from its movements, they were understood to possess the ability to receive the message from that particular deity directly through the media of birdsong.

The great seer Melampus (founding seer of the Melampodidae branch of seers) was said to have been able to understand bird song after having his ears licked by snakes.⁴⁵⁶ We do not often hear of μάντεις with these advanced abilities in historical texts. The μάντεις of the classical period appear to have interpreted omens based solely upon the flight pattern, behaviour and breed of the birds that they witnessed, although they might have recognised the type of bird by its call.

Another area for consideration is whether there was a consensus in bird interpretations between the rival mantic families, as surely some consistency in the possible interpretations available would have been important. This is something which is difficult to determine for

⁴⁵³ See chapter III of this thesis.

⁴⁵⁴ For more on the acquisition of μαντική, see chapter II 32-40.

⁴⁵⁵ Consider Kimon encountering a liver without a lobe in a sacrifice which predicted his death. Plut. *Kim.* 18. For further discussion of this, see below 132-134.

⁴⁵⁶ Apollod. *Lib.* I:9.12. For a discussion of this and the link between saliva and prophecy, see chapter II 33-34, see also Johnston (2008) 111.

certain, as without any surviving texts detailing precise interpretations which were applicable at the time to bird behaviour, our progress in settling this matter is hindered substantially.

As in other forms of divination, it is clear that there were consequences for those concerned if the divine signs were ignored. In Plutarch's *Life of Nicias* we find that before the Athenians sailed to conquer Sicily in 415 B.C. news reached Athens from Delphi to inform them that ravens had damaged a Palladium statue which the Athenians had donated to Delphi after the Persian wars. This was interpreted by the Delphians as a bad omen for the Sicilian Expedition, but the Athenians did not take heed and it later transpired that the expedition was a costly failure.⁴⁵⁷

From preserved examples such as this which warn of the risks of ignoring omens, it seems clear that these avian omens played a strong part in the decision making process of the ancient Greeks - the earlier mention of Xenophon en route to Ephesus demonstrates this plainly.⁴⁵⁸ Recorded instances like this with the Athenians, where the decision was made in spite of a negative bird omen to perform a certain action, which inevitably produced a negative result, such as events of the Sicilian Expedition, demonstrate that even if there were individuals or city states willing to ignore avian portents when making a decision, they would certainly learn their lesson for future decisions through the negative subsequent events that would follow such a rash decision.⁴⁵⁹ Ornithomancy was clearly a well-respected method of divination and it was essential for a μάντις to possess this interpretative skill, as a detailed knowledge of this subject was deemed invaluable.

What I find most gripping about the subject of ornithomancy is that the intuition of birds and other animals remains a subject which is still of interest to scholars today from a variety of disciplines. Despite the fact that the practice of ornithomancy has not fully survived

⁴⁵⁷ Plut. *Nic.* 13. For more on omens concerning the Sicilian Expedition, see Nilsson (1972) 134-135.

⁴⁵⁸ See 118.

⁴⁵⁹ Mikalson (2002) 196: 'Since all oracles, omens, manteis and dreams will prove true, those who ignore, forget, misinterpret, or reject them are, as in tragedy, from that moment marked for destruction and suffering.' Although this statement refers to the work of Herodotus, I believe it is widely applicable across classical literature.

(in the ancient Greek form at least), the concept of birds demonstrating an awareness of impending weather changes or disasters is well documented and relatively well established.

In January 2015 an article was published in *Current Biology*, which highlighted the recent work of Streby et al., who were studying the migration patterns of five golden-winged warblers (*Vermivora chrysoptera*). These scientists were surprised when within just a few days of returning to their nesting territories from their spring migration, the five warblers fled to the Gulf of Mexico, some 700 kilometres away. The southern and central United States was then hit by a severe weather system, which spawned 84 documented tornadoes, causing 35 human fatalities and costing over 1 billion US dollars in property damage.⁴⁶⁰

This recent instance demonstrates clearly that we still have a lot to learn about the intuition of birds and that in many ways the ancient Greeks were right to pay such close attention to their behaviour.

ii). Cleidonomancy:

The sheer unpredictability of divine outcomes was undoubtedly an element of what made divination an appealing process. This unpredictable aspect was evidently a part of what made the Greeks believe that these various types of divination were genuine methods of communication with the gods; it was the process of communicating with the divine as far as they were concerned and chance was not considered to be a factor.

As a result of this piety, great care was taken to prepare and carry out any required ritual precisely, yet something which we would now perceive as portentously insignificant such as an unexpected coughing fit or a sneeze was interpreted in ancient Greece as an omen, and these interruptions to ritual practices potentially affected the outcome of a sacrifice or subsequent decisions.⁴⁶¹

An informative example of such a scenario is found in Plutarch's *Life of Themistokles*. Whilst preparing for the battle of Salamis, Themistokles was interrupted mid-sacrifice by the

⁴⁶⁰ Streby et al. (2015) 98-102.

⁴⁶¹ For an introduction to pollution and purification, see Parker (1983).

presentation of three prisoners of war, who he was informed were the nephews of the Persian king Xerxes. At this point the seer Euphrantides, who we can only presume was present at the time to conduct [τὰ ἱερὰ](#) (the pre-battle sacrifice) on Themistokles' behalf, spoke out and requested that the youths be consecrated then sacrificed to Dionysus Carnivorous, for this action would guarantee victory for the Greeks in the forthcoming battle. He was induced to speak in this way because at the very moment when the youths were presented to Themistokles a large flame shot up from the sacrificial victim and someone present sneezed on the right-hand side.⁴⁶²

These two simultaneous portents were interpreted by the seer to mean that if a human sacrifice was performed, victory would be certain. Plutarch informs us that despite Themistokles' shock and abhorrence on hearing the advice, there was no choice but to appease the deity by performing the sacrifice as recommended by the seer, as Euphrantides had already persuaded those present that his advice was sound.⁴⁶³ This instance is particularly informative as the account of the event is so detailed. From this text we are now aware that a pre-naval battle sacrifice was performed, that the shooting of flames from the sacrificial victim was interpreted as an omen and that if a sneeze occurred on the right-hand side it was interpreted as an affirmative portent.⁴⁶⁴

The most striking aspect of this passage is the description of a historical human sacrifice. Human sacrifices are not considered to have been common practice in Greek religion, but instances such as this confirm that there were occasions where they did occur and that these incidents were not restricted purely to times of myth nor solely implemented by 'less civilised' city states. The fact that Plutarch records Themistokles' disgust at the concept and explains that the masses were persuaded only as a result of the stress of their current

⁴⁶² For Euphrantides, see Kett (1966) 41-42 and Roth (1982) 275.

⁴⁶³ Plut. *Them.* 13.

⁴⁶⁴ For an introduction to Greek sacrifice, see Kirk (1981) 41-90; Burkert (1983); Durand (1986); Detienne and Vernant (1989); Hughes (1991); Burkert (2001); Ekroth (2007) 387-469; Bremmer (2010) 133-144; Wright Knust and Varhelyi (2011) notably the articles by Ullucci 57-75 and Rives 187-202; Faraone and Naiden (2012); Naiden (2013b) and Jameson (2014) 98-126. The right-hand side as a positive sign is relatively unsurprising here as it matches the logic of ornithomancy.

circumstances in wartime. He attempts to reassure the reader that the ancient Greeks did not usually behave in this manner and the resulting impression is that this event was an anomaly.⁴⁶⁵

Irrespective of this, the fact of the matter is that the resulting events occurred due to the manifestation of these particular omens at this specific point in time and this emphasises the importance of omens during the events of the classical period and the influence that they had on the outcome of historical events.

All omens were unpredictable and this tested the resourceful nature of independent diviners, as they were expected to interpret any ominous incident immediately after it had occurred, just as with ornithomancy. This type of divination is particularly fascinating, as possible interpretations of chance occurrences were likely to have been far more varied than in the other methods of divination which feature in this chapter, as it seems that there was no limit as to what kind of everyday occurrences were interpreted as omens.

However, the one factor that it seems can be applied to cledonancy is the idea that as with ornithomancy, the direction of the origin of the portent was of great importance when it came to interpretation. From the example above it is clear that the same left-side, right-side concept was applicable, i.e. occurrences involving the right-hand side were considered very fortunate, whilst occurrences to the left-hand side were in some interpretations more likely to be considered unpropitious.⁴⁶⁶

In Diogenes Laertius we are told that Diogenes the Cynic once threatened to make a man tremble by sneezing to his left-hand side, the understanding is that this was deemed to be some sort of threat because of the unlucky connotations following such an action.⁴⁶⁷ In Cicero's *De Divinatione* we are informed that for the Romans, occurrences observed on the left-hand side were considered lucky, in contrast to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks, which were the opposite.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ For a treatment of this particular occasion, see Henrichs (1981) 195-235 and Hughes (1991) 111-115.

⁴⁶⁶ See Catul. 45:8-9 and 17-19 for sneezes in both directions. See also, Pease (1911) 433.

⁴⁶⁷ Diog. Laer. VI:2.48.

⁴⁶⁸ Cic. *De Div.* II.43 and Catul. 45:8-18.

There is an instance in Homer's *Odyssey* in which Telemachus sneezed immediately after Penelope predicted ruin and violence for the suitors at the hands of the returned Odysseus. Thus the sneeze was interpreted by her and accepted by those present to seal the fate of the suitors, as the sneeze indicated that the gods agreed with her forecast of future events.⁴⁶⁹ In this particular instance the location of Telemachus in relation to Penelope is not highlighted and so it is possible that the direction of the sneeze did not necessarily factor into this interpretation; the timing of the sneeze was enough of an affirmation of what had just been said.

Similarly, there is an account in Xenophon in which he addressed the men and said:

‘σὺν τοῖς θεοῖς πολλαὶ ἡμῖν καὶ καλαὶ ἐλπίδες εἰσὶ σωτηρίας.’

‘Then, with the help of heaven, we have many glorious hopes of safety.’

Whereupon someone sneezed, and this omen was accepted by all those present to mean that the gods were in accordance with their actions. Thus they offered a sacrifice in thanks for the reassurance.⁴⁷⁰ These instances demonstrate clearly that to the ancient Greeks sneezes were believed to have been divinely induced actions that needed to be interpreted as messages sent from the gods to confirm divine feelings towards the current deliberation.

From these instances it is apparent that independent diviners were not always required to interpret these occurrences. In Plutarch's *Life of Themistokles* it was the μάντις Euphrantides who interpreted the omens and made the radical suggestion for subsequent action. In the other accounts of ominous sneezes the interpretation was much more straightforward. It seems that the most common interpretation was a simple affirmation or negation of what had been said at the exact time before the sneeze occurred.

This was interpreted by whoever was present and this was usually understood by all to mean the same thing, such as with Xenophon and his troops, and those with Penelope when

⁴⁶⁹ Hom. *Od.* XVII:540-550.

⁴⁷⁰ Xen. *Anab.* III:2.8-10, tr. Warner. See also, Pease (1911) 437.

Telemachus sneezed. It seems that the implications of sneezing as an omen were not restricted to historical accounts and that direction was not necessarily always the deciding factor when it came to interpretation.⁴⁷¹ Yet it is clear from the sources that sneezes were not the only occurrences which were observed and considered carefully during everyday life in ancient Greece.

iii). Meteorological and geological portents:

Another facet of the natural world which contained an aspect of mystery for the ancient Greeks was the various weather phenomena that were characteristic of the Greek climate and the temperamental surrounding seas. The belief among many was that the gods were responsible for such occurrences and so if a well-timed roll of thunder happened at the same time as someone had finished speaking then it was perceived to be an omen.

Alternatively, if the weather was preventing a particular action then a μάντις was required to investigate the possible causes of the bad weather, as the gods were accountable for such things. Arguably the most famous example of this is when the Greek fleet was unable to depart from Aulis at the commencement of the Trojan invasion. Whilst awaiting departure from Aulis the Greeks went hunting and killed a white doe which was sacred to Artemis. The goddess then sent strong winds to prevent the Greek fleet from departing on their expedition in retaliation and so the Greek leaders then turned to the seer Calchas to determine the cause of their misfortune and to discover how they might best resolve the problem.

As we know the result was the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter Iphigenia to appease the goddess; another example of a human sacrifice in Greek legend.⁴⁷² In fact this sacrifice held such significance to the ancient Greeks that the Spartan king Agesilaos decided to travel to Aulis to replicate the sacrifice with animal victims before embarking to Ephesus

⁴⁷¹ For an informative study of sneezing, see Pease (1911) 429-443.

⁴⁷² Eur. *IA*. 80. See also Henrichs (1981) 195-235. For further discussion of this incident for Agesilaos, see Hornblower (2011) 26-27.

in a campaign against Persian oppression of Greek cities on the Aegean. It is clear that he felt that divine support from the goddess Artemis would bring him success.

Unfortunately for Agesilaos the Boeotarchs refused to grant permission for the sacrifice and interrupted the ritual, which angered Agesilaos greatly. Despite the fact that there was no weather occurrence here which needed to be quelled, it is still interesting that Agesilaos wished to repeat history by embarking towards Asia Minor in a similar fashion to Agamemnon.⁴⁷³

In terms of meteorological and geological occurrences, we are fortunate that the ancient sources recorded accounts of these unusual events. A more mysterious example is found in Herodotus when Xerxes led the Persian invasion to Greece. A contingent was sent off to subdue the oracle at Delphi and to bring its treasures to Xerxes. The Delphians consulted the oracle when they learned of the approaching force, as they wished to protect the sanctuary. The god's response was that he could protect what was his and that the Delphians should do nothing but protect themselves.

The account in Herodotus informs us that when the Persians drew near they were struck by thunderbolts and two peaks which had broken off from Mount Parnassus came rushing down the mountain and enveloped the enemy. Some survivors from the Persian force also said that two great warriors, who were far larger than men pursued and cut down their comrades. Thus the Delphians believed that Apollo had protected his temple.⁴⁷⁴

Thucydides is a source who is not particularly well known for his inclusion of omens and portents, yet we have a very interesting account from him in which the Spartan king Agis II turned back from an invasion of Attica on account of several earthquakes.⁴⁷⁵ This instance demonstrates clearly the piety of the Spartans especially, as omens such as these were taken very seriously. It was completely acceptable to abandon a military campaign if it was deemed

⁴⁷³ Xen. *Hell.* III:4.3. See also Hughes (1991) 110.

⁴⁷⁴ Hdt. VIII:35-38.

⁴⁷⁵ Thuc. III.89; Xenophon also records this earthquake. *Hell.* III.2.22-24. See Pownall (1998) 264-265 for a discussion of this occurrence.

that the gods were not in favour of the expedition. Divine approval was pivotal if a general or a king expected to succeed in his endeavour.

In this particular instance Thucydides also tells us of other natural occurrences at this time which he believed were caused by the earthquake. He describes two tidal waves occurring at Euboea and Atalanta and further earth tremors.⁴⁷⁶ What is especially interesting in this instance is the fact that Thucydides was able to recognise the correlation between the earthquakes and tidal movements and this demonstrates that the view among the ancient Greeks was not necessarily always one which blindly accredited all actions to the gods without a consideration for science.

iv). Oneiromancy:

Dreams played a very important role in ancient Greek divination. Unusual dreams were given special attention and scrutiny, as some dreams were believed to carry messages from the gods.⁴⁷⁷ A μάντις needed to be able to interpret dreams in order to pass on the divine message to the dreamer, but as with ornithomancy and cledonmancy it was an aspect of divination that could be interpreted by anyone to a certain extent without the specific presence of a μάντις. An example of this has been preserved in Herodotus concerning the Athenian tyrant Hippias.

Before the Persian force landed at Marathon he had a dream in which he slept with his mother. His initial thought was that the dream foretold that he would return from exile and grow old in Athens. Yet on landing at Marathon and on disembarking from the ship Hippias was seized by a violent sneezing fit and lost one of his teeth in the process. He searched everywhere in the sand for his tooth but to no avail. He realised in this moment that he had

⁴⁷⁶ Thuc. III.89.

⁴⁷⁷ For an overview of dreams in ancient Greece, see Lewis (1976); Hanson (1980) 1394-1427; van Lieshout (1981); Miller (1990) 401-404; Athanassiadi (1993) 15-30; Vinagre (1996) 257-282; Noegel (2002) 167-182 and Näf (2004).

incorrectly interpreted the dream and that the part of Greece that he owned had been in his tooth, which was now lost forever.⁴⁷⁸

This interpretation was realised in the later defeat of the Persians by the Athenians at Marathon; Hippias died in Persia with his dream of returning to Athens ruined. In this instance, Hippias interpreted the dream himself without a specialist present, but it must be noted that he was incorrect in his initial interpretation, despite his interest in divination and renowned knowledge of oracles.⁴⁷⁹

An account which provides an example of an individual who was not a specialist in oneiromancy, but who correctly interpreted his own dream is found in Xenophon. In Book IV of the *Anabasis*, the Greek mercenary army was stuck for a day and a night next to a river, which was difficult enough to cross in itself, but there was also the added complication of an enemy force at their rear, which was waiting to fall upon them when they attempted to negotiate safe passage.

That night, Xenophon dreamt that he was bound with fetters, but they released him of their own accord and he was able to move as he pleased. Recognising the good omen, he revealed his dream and the favourable interpretation to Cheirisophus and on the next day when τὰ σφάγια (blood-letting ritual) revealed that it was favourable for them to cross the river, they performed a libation in thanks.⁴⁸⁰ From this account we can see clearly the influence of dream interpretation on historical events.

Another dream recorded in Herodotus came to Hippias' brother Hipparchos, who was murdered in the Panathenaea procession on the next day after relaying his dream to the dream interpreters. The dream itself involved a tall and handsome man stood over Hipparchos and he said:

⁴⁷⁸ Hdt. VI:107. See Näf (2004) 46 for a discussion of this dream.

⁴⁷⁹ Note that the Peisistratids are described in Herodotus as attended by various types of diviners, or if not accompanied by one at least recognising the importance of the interpretation of signs. See Hdt. I:62, V:62 and VI:66. See also Shapiro (1990) 335-345. For a treatment of this episode, see Bonner (1906) 235-238.

⁴⁸⁰ Xen. *Anab.* IV:3.8-9. For a discussion of τὰ σφάγια at river crossings, see Jameson (2014) 103-106.

‘τλήθι λέων ἄτλητα παθὼν τετλήοτι θυμῷ:

οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων ἀδικῶν τίσιν οὐκ ποτίσει.’

‘O lion, endure the unendurable with enduring heart;

No man does wrong and shall not pay the penalty.’⁴⁸¹

What is interesting about this account in Herodotus is that we are not given any further information about whether the dream interpreters gave an explanation of the dream to Hipparchos before he was killed or whether he had just told them about the dream in passing before the procession and they were due to tell him what the dream meant afterwards.

The preservation of the story in Herodotus and the fact that Hipparchos was murdered on the next day demonstrates very clearly what the dream was supposed to mean, we are told by Herodotus that Hipparchos ‘put the dream from his mind’ and continued on to the procession.

In terms of Hipparchos’ background we know from Herodotus that the joint tyranny held by Hipparchos and Hippias was nowhere near as successful as the tyranny had been under their father Peisistratos, Hipparchos was known to have been a cruel individual and perhaps this is why he was told that no one is above punishment in his dream, to warn him that he would soon enough be suffering the consequences of his actions.⁴⁸²

A disappointing omission from this account is that we do not know if there were any consequences for the dream interpreters upon hearing of his brother’s demise after he had relayed the dream to them. We do know that Hippias punished several leading families in Athens after his brother’s death and that he was forced to punish harshly in order to maintain his position as tyrant in the city. Whether from this we are meant to assume that the dream interpreters made up a group of the individuals punished is unclear, but it is a logical conclusion to reach nonetheless.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ Hdt. V:56, tr. de Sélincourt.

⁴⁸² For more information on the murder of Hipparchos, see Fornara (1968) 400-424.

⁴⁸³ Hdt. V:62. See also, Fornara (1968) 400-424.

There is also an account preserved in Diodorus that describes the Athenian general Thrasybulus having a dream just before the Battle of Arginusae, which was interpreted by the μάντις present to predict the death of seven of the generals. The generals decided to not let word of this pass to the army and so only shared with them the news of propitious omens for victory. Despite successfully defeating the Spartans in the naval battle which ensued, the generals were put to death by the vote of the Athenian assembly for neglecting to retrieve the Athenian dead and wounded from the sea because of a storm which occurred just after the battle.

The fact that the Athenian generals decided to hide the interpretation of the dream from the army demonstrates that they recognised the negative effect that the dream would have had on morale, and this further emphasises the fact that dreams were obviously held in high regard as a method of divination in Athens at this time at least.⁴⁸⁴

This is evident again in the fact that in 422 B.C. Aristophanes opened his play *Wasps* with two slaves discussing their dreams and the possible significance of them as a prediction of future events. The fact that Aristophanes felt it worth including such a discussion in one of his plays, especially considering the social status of the characters involved in the discussion, demonstrates the importance of dream interpretation in everyday life in Athens during the fifth century B.C. especially.⁴⁸⁵

Half a century previously, the Athenian general Kimon had a dream before embarking on campaign to Cyprus and Egypt. He dreamt that a bitch was calling to him with both a human voice and the bark of a dog and it said:

‘στεῖχε: φίλος γὰρ ἔσῃ καὶ ἐμοὶ καὶ ἐμοῖς σκυλάκεσσιν.’

‘Go your way: I shall find you a friend both to me and my puppies.’⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ Diod Sic. XIII:97.6. Flower (2008b) 167-169.

⁴⁸⁵ Aristoph. *Wasps*. 1-53.

⁴⁸⁶ Plut. *Kim*. 18, tr. Scott-Kilvert.

Kimon consulted his friend Astyphilos of Posidonia, who was a seer, and he interpreted the dream to portend Kimon's death.⁴⁸⁷ Regardless of this warning and an inauspicious sacrifice (which will be explored in detail in the next section), Kimon continued on with his campaign and died in Cyprus. This account provides us with an insight into the process of dream interpretation, as the interpretive process of this particular dream was included in the chapter. Plutarch describes Astyphilos' analysis of the dream in this way:

‘κύων ἀνθρώπων, πρὸς ὃν ὕλακτεῖ, πολέμιος: πολέμιω δ' οὐκ ἄν τις μᾶλλον ἢ τελευτήσας φίλος
γένοιτο: τὸ δὲ μῖγμα τῆς φωνῆς Μῆδον ἀποδηλοῖ τὸν ἐχθρόν.’

‘A dog is the enemy of the man it barks at: and one can do an enemy no greater service than to die.

The blending of animal and human speech signifies that the enemy is the Mede.’⁴⁸⁸

Oneiromancy was similar to cledonancy and ornithomancy in the fact that non-specialists attempted to interpret either their own dreams or the dreams of their companions without necessarily possessing μαντική or being a recognised religious specialist or seer. This implies that a basic understanding of dream interpretation might have been more common in ancient Greece than is usually acknowledged.

Perhaps as with ornithomancy there were certain interpretations that were considered to be more obvious and so were easily understood by the vast majority of ‘everyday’ Greeks. However, as with ornithomancy, there would have been common instances in which a layman could not have interpreted a dream themselves and so it was on occasions such as this where an independent diviner was required.

Arguably for important officials such as Kimon, it was even more essential for them to have the services and interpretative knowledge of a specialist μάντις to hand, as dreams

⁴⁸⁷ For Astyphilos, see Kett (1966) 30-31 and Roth (1982) 271.

⁴⁸⁸ Plut. *Kim.* 18 tr. Scott-Kilvert 161-2. See also Burkert (1992) 50.

especially were understood to have had a sense of foreboding for future events attached to them.

It can certainly be argued that in the accounts of dreams that we have preserved in sources such as Herodotus and Plutarch, the dreams always anticipate a life changing event in the dreamer's life, although it is often the case that the dream is either interpreted incorrectly or ignored so that the protagonist continues irrevocably towards their fate.⁴⁸⁹

The art of dream interpretation was the most complicated aspect of the τέχνη for a seer. This is due to the fact that the subconscious can imagine the most unusual things. It would have been very difficult for a μάντις to try to pre-empt the content of their enquirers' dreams. Even if a catalogue of dream interpretations did exist during the classical period⁴⁹⁰ and was available to be utilised by μάντιες, it would have been impossible for such a document to catalogue every possible concept and the likely interpretations that could have been applicable to each individual enquirer.

In addition, I imagine that it would have been very difficult for such a document to have been readily accessible for consultation by the large number of μάντιες in operation during the classical period. This is why in my opinion dream interpretation was one of the hardest areas of divination tasked to a μάντις, as not only would it have been difficult for there to be cohesion across independent diviners in terms of possible explanations, but at the same time the interpretive process itself would have most certainly involved a large amount of improvisation and ingenuity. At least with ornithomancy for example, a μάντις was able to observe and learn each particular species of bird and the usual interpretations that were associated with specific behaviours, sounds or lines of flight.

Similarly from the examples that we have of cledonmancy in the sources, it seems that any unusual occurrence could have been interpreted as an omen, but it does not seem that a μάντις was expected to provide much detail in their interpretation of these manifestations.

⁴⁸⁹ See Lattimore (1939) 24-35 for the wise advisor in Herodotus.

⁴⁹⁰ The surviving work of Artemidorus on dreams from the third century A.D. provides an insight into the topic but was compiled much later than the time period treated in this study. See also Lewis (1976) 53-74 and Näf (2004) for further reading.

Whereas where dreams were concerned, the likelihood was that they were alluding to something specific in the enquirer's life that needed to be highlighted and explored, which is why the gods were sending a message to the enquirer. From the sources it is clear that dreams were often a warning for the recipient and the skills of a μάντις needed be utilised to help discover the meaning before the event concerned actually happened.⁴⁹¹

The interpretation of dreams remains a largely inexplicable topic which is of interest to many cultures today and yet we are still nowhere near unravelling precise meanings for dreams (if they are meant to be found) in a manner that is universally accepted. Thus far very little has been discovered as to which interpretations were understood for certain dreams in an ancient Greek context, as little evidence remains in this particular area. Cleidomancy and oneiromancy are the two methods of divination in ancient Greece, in my view, that have the most mystery surrounding them in terms of interpretation and unless further evidence is discovered, these precise interpretations and their application in different contexts will remain unknown.

v). Divine inspiration

Plato informs us that the Greeks derived the word for prophecy (μαντική) from the noun (*mania*) beginning the association between prophecy and madness.⁴⁹² This view is generally accepted by both ancient and modern scholars, as clearly the ancient Greeks acknowledged this connection.⁴⁹³ The descriptions of the divine frenzy of the Pythia at Delphi are a testimony to this view, as the god Apollo was understood to inhabit the goddess so that she was able to pass on his divine responses to those who sought him out at Delphi with enquiries.⁴⁹⁴

Historically the representation of μάντιες is not one of individuals whose main area of expertise originated from direct divine inspiration and prophecy. The vast majority of

⁴⁹¹ See above for the warning dreams received by Hippias, Hipparchos and Kimon.

⁴⁹² Plat. *Phaed.* 244c; Cicero *de Div* I:1. See Ballériaux 35-43 and Flower (2008b) 84.

⁴⁹³ See Burkert (1985a) 112 and, more recently, Nissinen (2010) 341-342.

⁴⁹⁴ For an example of this, see Diod. Sic. XVI:26.

instances where a μάντις was expected to prophesise in some way came more from sporadic occasions preserved in Homeric works of legend and Greek mythology rather than historical accounts of independent diviners. Rather the main image presented of historical independent diviners projects more an idea of religious specialists whose role in relation to the divine was more of an interpretative one rather than playing the role of a vessel to the gods.⁴⁹⁵ This notion is also supported by Pausanias in Book I of his *Description of Greece*.⁴⁹⁶

From this excerpt it is clear that Pausanias believed that divine inspiration for seers was a skill of the past. The only evidence of an exception to this statement from the classical period is found in Herodotus, where the χρησμολόγος Amphilytos made the spontaneous ‘tunny fish’ prophecy.⁴⁹⁷ Other than this exception, there is little to suggest that spontaneous prophesying was part of an independent diviner’s repertoire by the classical period.

In terms of the divine inspiration in mythology, one of the first individuals to spring to mind is the ill-fated Cassandra. Cassandra was not necessarily classed as a μάντις, but she was an individual who had received the gift of prophecy directly from the gods, whether that came from Apollo himself or from snakes is debatable, depending upon which myth you consider.⁴⁹⁸

vi). Extispicy:

Extispicy is the practice of examining animal entrails in order to predict future events. The animal, usually a goat, sheep or an ox, was sacrificed as part of a ritual during which a μάντις would examine the entrails, looking carefully for unusual occurrences such as discolouration, scarring, or tumours.

The liver was the most commonly and closely examined organ of an animal, as it was considered to be both the seat of emotions and closest to the gods.⁴⁹⁹ The art of examining the

⁴⁹⁵ Nock (1972) II:539. See chapter III for the evolution of the role of a mantis from myth through to the end of the classical period.

⁴⁹⁶ Paus. I:34.4. See chapter II 43 for a discussion of this passage. See also Callan (1985) 125-140.

⁴⁹⁷ Hdt. I:62. For an analysis of this passage, see chapter II 50-52. See also Nilsson (1972) 131.

⁴⁹⁸ For further reading, see Neblung (1997).

⁴⁹⁹ Plat. *Tim.* 71a-e.

liver specifically was known as Hepatoscopy.⁵⁰⁰ In this section extispicy will be explored in the context of its application during military campaigns along with the role of extispicy in other areas of ancient Greek life, such within city states.

There were two types of sacrifice which were employed by a μάντις on a military campaign and these were known as τὰ ἱερὰ and τὰ σφάγια. τὰ ἱερὰ involved a lengthier and more detailed sacrificial ritual, which utilised most of the sacrificial victim's body parts at various intervals, whereas τὰ σφάγια appear to have been more about simple blood-letting rather than an examination of the organs.

It was common for τὰ ἱερὰ to be performed in the following scenarios: at home before departure on a military campaign, before crossing borders, at the campsite before departure to the next destination and at campsite on the day of battle. τὰ σφάγια on the other hand, was performed at crossings of expanses of water, such as rivers or seas and on the battle-line when direct conflict was imminent.

This was a method of divination in which it is clear that it was preferable for an expert to administer the ritual sacrifice, yet it was not so restrictive a practice that the sacrifice could not be performed in the absence of a specialist. Extispicy was an area of divination in which those without μαντική gradually began to gain more knowledge about what the appearance of certain entrails meant and what they should look for when examining a sacrificial victim in order to interpret the entrails themselves, and this seems to have developed throughout the course of the classical period.

vi.a). [τὰ ἱερὰ](#):

[τὰ ἱερὰ](#) were the most common form of animal sacrifice and it was the practice of choice in the majority of divinatory circumstances when it was necessary for an independent diviner to consult the gods. The procedure entailed the μάντις slaughtering an animal designated for this particular ritual purpose and examining the condition of its entrails. When

⁵⁰⁰ For further reading on Hepatoscopy, see Durand, J. L. & Lissarrague (1979) 92-108 and Collins (2008b) 319-345.

a more specific answer was the required, the liver was paid special attention, as it was believed to have been linked more closely with divination than the other organs. The appearance of the σπλάγχνα (inner organs) was of the utmost interest, along with the reaction of the organs when placed upon the sacrificial fire.⁵⁰¹

Procedure:

τὰ ἱερά seemed to follow a more standardised ritual procedure compared to τὰ σφάγια as there was usually an altar for the victim, an examination of entrails, a sacred fire and the cooking and consumption of the victim as part of a feast. The process was a lot more time consuming than τὰ σφάγια and it seems that it was more important to perform the consultation carefully and precisely rather than rush and risk marring the ritual in some way. Obtaining an auspicious response was of the utmost importance.

We have several examples in the sources of τὰ ἱερά being performed in the aforementioned scenarios. An instance from Xenophon describes all of the generals who were on campaign in Asia Minor offering τὰ ἱερά at daybreak.⁵⁰² We know that the Spartans especially were meticulous in their adherence to ritual on deciding to go to war, although the king was the overseer of the ritual consultation rather than a μάντις.

There was an initial sacrifice upon making a decision to go to war; once this was auspicious the sacred fire would be carried to the border and another sacrifice would be performed there before the Spartan army was permitted to continue. Any subsequent sacrifices were performed before dawn, to ensure that the events of the following day were auspicious and to ensure that the Spartan force had divine approval to proceed.⁵⁰³

On Campaign:

⁵⁰¹ Pritchett (1979a) III:73-8 provides a useful introduction to the subject.

⁵⁰² See Xen. *Anab.* IV:3.9.

⁵⁰³ Xen. *Const. Lac.* XIII.2-5. For more on Spartan procedure, see Burkert (1983) 66-67; Jameson (1991) 200-212 and Rawlings (2007) 188.

Xenophon's *Anabasis* contains a wealth of examples of the ritual behaviour of a travelling army.⁵⁰⁴ There is an instance in which the Greek force was stuck in Thrace with dwindling supplies because the sacrifices would not permit the army to move on from their camp. The fact that the army remained in position until the sacrifices were auspicious demonstrates the influence that these rituals had on the military process.

In this particular instance, Xenophon and his men needed desperately to decamp in order to search for food but the sacrifices would not allow it. As a result, another commander took a small force to find supplies in a neighbouring village without divine assent and the expedition was set upon by an enemy force. Xenophon swiftly sacrificed for permission to intervene and upon receiving consent rushed to their aid. This event would have emphasised to the troops the importance of divine approval towards their enterprise, as the consequences for ignoring such rituals were very clear in this particular instance.⁵⁰⁵

A noteworthy point from this passage is that Xenophon was initially sacrificing with a view to setting out from camp and refurnishing the army with provisions. After a few days of continual negative responses, Xenophon amended his question to specify the intention purely to obtain more provisions, rather than the army set out entirely, as this was the more pressing request of the two.

Presumably Xenophon wanted to ensure that the gods were not simply objecting to their departure from that particular site rather than not wishing the Greek force to obtain important provisions. The fact the Greeks were additionally concerned because they were running so low on supplies that they were lacking in sacrificial victims, demonstrates the strong influence that the will of the gods had upon the decision making process. Xenophon refused to set out with the army without obtaining the correct divine consent to do so.

Even after hearing that those who had gone inauspiciously in search of provisions had fallen under attack, he still refrained from rushing to their assistance until he had performed a

⁵⁰⁴ See Xen. *Anab.* V:2.9; VI:1.31 for a selection of examples.

⁵⁰⁵ Xen. *Anab.* VI:4.9-5.7. For a discussion of the religious requirements for setting out for war, see Rawlings (2007) 187-190.

sacrifice beforehand to gain permission to intervene. This emphasises the importance of such ritual practices and the fact that Xenophon adhered to them so strictly, even when his soldiers were in grave danger and very far from home, demonstrates clearly how well established these religious practices were during the classical period.

Interpretation:

Plutarch's account detailing the sacrifice performed by Kimon's seer Astyphilos before his expedition to Cyprus is a very important passage because it provides us with an instance in sacrifice in which the abnormality observed in the entrails was so apparent that the meaning of the omen was entirely clear, and this did not bode well for the general.

While Astyphilos was cutting up the sacrificial victim, swarms of ants carried the congealing blood to Kimon in stages and placed the blood by his foot without him noticing. He became aware of their actions just as he was presented with the liver of the sacrificial victim, which was missing a lobe. This was a very clear ominous message from the gods, as it was widely understood that a sacrificial victim without a lobe was one of the most ill-fated omens that a general could be presented with.⁵⁰⁶

This instance is very informative because it details that the entrails of the sacrificial victim were definitely scrutinised by an independent diviner. This also demonstrates the importance of seers during this period, as following his experience of a portentous dream Kimon immediately consulted Astyphilos for guidance, whereupon the seer performed the sacrifice to Dionysus after interpreting the dream and this highlights the importance of a specialist seer both as an interpreter and as a performer of ritual sacrifices. Clearly Kimon felt that a specialist μάντις was required in this particular instance and Plutarch does not highlight an attempt on Kimon's part to interpret the message of the dream himself.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore the role of independent diviners as performers of τὰ ἱερὰ is clear.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ Plut. *Kim.* 18. See Collins (2008b) 319-345 for a thorough treatment of hepatoscopy.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid. See above 132-134 for a discussion of the dream interpretation.

⁵⁰⁸ For further reading on τὰ ἱερὰ, see Lonis (1979) 95-115; Vernant (1989) 176-181; Flower (2008b) 159-165; Raphals (2013) 150 and Jameson (2014) 198-126.

vi.b). τὰ σφάγια:

τὰ σφάγια were a form of sacrifice which was observed mainly on two separate occasions during a military campaign. The main instances during which τὰ σφάγια were required to be performed were whenever the army came upon an expanse of water which it needed to cross and τὰ σφάγια were also observed by an army when immediate battle was imminent.

As a ritual it seems that there was less of a procedure to follow compared to the practices of τὰ ἱερά. The emphasis here was on the blood-letting itself rather than examining the corpse of the animal and so there was no feast or cooking of the meat to give a share to the gods. It strikes me that this ritual was more for asking a question of the gods and to receive a direct answer than anything else. Appeasement does not seem to have factored here in the same way that it did for τὰ ἱερά.

It has also been suggested that the dying movements of the animal were analysed along with the flow of blood pouring from the dying animal. Consider the sprinkling of the sacrificial goat with water at Delphi. This was an essential practice which had to be performed before the enquirer could proceed with an oracular consultation. The goat was sprinkled with water and the observers awaited a shudder to demonstrate that the goat was happy to be sacrificed and the god was amenable towards the day's consultations beginning.⁵⁰⁹

On the battlefield:

τὰ σφάγια involved the killing of a young goat the battlefield by slitting its throat. τὰ σφάγια were performed only before imminent battle and in the case of the Greek city states this was a ritual observed by both opposing sides. Neither phalanx would advance until an appropriate omen was observed in τὰ σφάγια by the μάντις present.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁹ Plut. *Mor.* 438:51. For an introduction to τὰ σφάγια, the work of Stengel (1896) 478-480 is still very informative. For something more recent, see Jameson (1991) 197-227.

⁵¹⁰ See Xen. *Const. Lac.* XIII:8; Plut. *Lyk.* 22; Xen. *Hell.* IV:2.20 for examples of τὰ σφάγια being performed when the enemy was close enough to see.

In contrast to the care taken to perform τὰ ἱερά, the pressure of time before a battle meant that τὰ σφάγια were a swift process where the focus was on the blood-letting; after the killing the entrails were scrutinised along with perhaps the dying movements of the animal. It does not seem that anything was done with the carcass of the animal, in contrast to the feast that was customary after performing τὰ ἱερά. It seems instead that the carcass remained where it lay after the sacrifice was performed as battle immediately ensued. Thus it is clear that the preservation of the carcass was hardly a pressing matter at that particular point in time.

Once τὰ σφάγια were pronounced as favourable in battle the army would advance on their enemy, singing the battle paian to avert evil. If they were successful in battle, the army would erect a battlefield trophy to honour their victory and they would offer a sacrifice of thanks to the gods for their victory.

There are instances which have been preserved in the sources where we know that battle ensued without the performance of the customary σφάγια, however, as we shall see it seems that the result of the battle was rarely in favour of the side that had not performed the customary sacrifices.

Whether this was purely because in those particular situations the side who failed to perform the sacrifices were caught unawares in a surprise attack, it is clear that there was some kind of a military disadvantage along with a psychological element in that the soldiers would no doubt be aware that they were fighting without divine consent; therefore, this would inevitably have affected their performance in battle. Alternatively, there might have been a conscious decision on the part of the general not to perform the customary sacrifice for some other reason and this still generated that same psychological effect on the morale of the soldiers and in turn their performance in battle.

Thucydides provides us with an account during the Peloponnesian war in which Brasidas attacked the Athenians when he spotted them in a vulnerable position at Amphipolis and due to the impromptu nature of his attack there was no time for the Athenians to perform the customary σφάγια before engaging the Spartan side.

This is an unusual account, as it is generally understood that no Greek side would engage another until the appropriate sacrifices had been performed, yet here we have a preserved account where the opposite occurred. The reasoning behind Brasidas' decision to attack the Athenians is highlighted in Thucydides.

The Athenian general Cleon had advanced on Amphipolis with a force from Athens to subdue the city as it was in revolt from the Delian League. The people of Amphipolis had appealed to the Peloponnesian League for assistance and so Brasidas had also journeyed to Amphipolis with a Spartan force and had men already stationed inside the city.

The Athenian force outnumbered the Spartans and so Cleon felt that his force was at a natural advantage and so proceeded towards Amphipolis without waiting for the reinforcements that he had recently sent for. Brasidas took advantage of a vulnerable moment when Cleon had turned his troops away from the city to return to camp, thus revealing their unprotected flank. He did this as he did not expect anyone from inside the city to challenge them. This underestimation of Spartan tactics resulted in a surprise attack on the Athenians by Brasidas which successfully routed the Athenian troops; this saved Amphipolis and resulted in Cleon's death. Brasidas was also mortally wounded in the process, but he was informed of the Spartan victory before he passed away.

The explanation in Thucydides gives the impression that the behaviour of Brasidas to charge the Athenians was not dishonourable, although it was certainly out of character for the opposing side to not draw up to face the invading army. Instead the reader is given the impression that Cleon was at fault for miscalculating Spartan movements and perhaps the fact that he was unable to perform the customary *σφάγια* contributed to the panic and disorder which ensued amongst the Athenian troops, This along with the fact that they were not properly positioned for battle would have contributed strongly to their defeat.⁵¹¹

At river crossings:

⁵¹¹ Thuc. V:7.1-11.2.

The battlefield τὰ σφάγια were of great importance to the ancient Greeks, but the importance of τὰ σφάγια when it came to crossing an expanse of water should not be overlooked or belittled as a result of this emphasis. τὰ σφάγια were performed at the crossing of rivers and seas (and occasionally for crossing boundaries too), and the required ritual for crossing a river was that the victim's throat was cut in the same way as before a battle, but in this instance the blood was permitted to flow from the victim into the water that the army wished the cross, and the manner in which the blood flowed into the water was carefully observed.

There is a famous example of Kleomenes having to abandon the crossing of the river Erasinus into Argive territory because τὰ σφάγια were not propitious. In the end Kleomenes praised the river for defending its countrymen. He then took his army towards the coast and they landed at another point in Argive territory after travelling by ship.⁵¹²

This passage is especially interesting because although Kleomenes respected the message of the sacrifice in the fact that he obeyed the divine message and decided not to cross the river, he still managed to achieve his aim to move into Argive territory by circumnavigating the river, whereas other (arguably more pious) kings and generals would have interpreted the results of the sacrifice to mean that they should abandon the campaign altogether and return home.

Consider this in comparison to an abandoned border crossing into Argive territory cited in Thucydides. The Spartans intended to invade Argive territory but had to abandon the campaign because the sacrifices for crossing the border were inauspicious. The fact that the Spartan force was forced to desist from their plan to invade Argive territory on account of the sacrifices demonstrates the importance of heeding the divine message. From their reaction to this response and the portrayal of Kleomenes in Herodotus, it seems far more likely that this was the expected behaviour rather than the account of Kleomenes' actions in Herodotus.⁵¹³

⁵¹² Hdt. VI:76. See also, Jameson (2014) 104.

⁵¹³ Thuc. V:116; Hdt. VI:76.

We have previously explored an instance from the *Anabasis* of a difficult river crossing in which Xenophon interpreted a dream about fetters to mean that the force would be able to cross the river. The meaning of the dream was realised when both τὰ ἱερὰ and τὰ σφάγια proved favourable the next morning. We can see that Xenophon is an invaluable source when it comes to extispicy as he was one of the few authors who endeavoured to emphasise when sacrifices were performed in his works.⁵¹⁴

In this instance he details the priests performing τὰ σφάγια while the army prepared to cross the river.⁵¹⁵ This is an especially interesting account as it explains that despite Xenophon having a dream that he believed to be indicative of a successful river crossing, the army still did not cross the river based on the interpretation of that dream alone, τὰ ἱερὰ and τὰ σφάγια had to be performed separately and accepted as favourable before the army was able to decamp and attempt the river crossing.

This requirement could not be condensed into one all-encompassing sacrifice, as the nature of the two separate enquiries was that they merited a sacrifice each to enable the army to progress onwards. Therefore, τὰ ἱερὰ were necessary in order to pack up camp and τὰ σφάγια had to be performed so that the force could cross the river safely.

This instance provides the reader with a detailed insight into the essential ritual practices of the ancient Greeks whilst on military campaign. What is very revealing in this passage is that even with an enemy force pursuing them, these sacrifices had to be completed before any other action could be taken. We know from other similar situations in the *Anabasis* that Xenophon was not prepared to continue onwards without receiving the appropriate divine assent to do so.⁵¹⁶ Therefore it was even more advantageous that the dream, τὰ ἱερὰ and τὰ σφάγια were all immediately favourable, as this would undoubtedly have saved lives and

⁵¹⁴ As Mikalson observes: ‘He was simply, as Diogenes Laertius (II.56) characterized him centuries later, “pious, sacrifice-loving and able to interpret sacrificial victims”.’ (2010) 11-12.

⁵¹⁵ Xen. *Anab.* VI:3.3-20, see also 130 of this chapter for more information on the dream interpretation aspect of this passage.

⁵¹⁶ Xen. *Anab.* VI:4.9-5.7. See 137-9 for further scrutiny of this passage. See also Dillon (2008) 235-251.

avoiding injuries and fatalities within the Greek force, as they were able to depart from camp and cross the river swiftly thanks to the auspicious sacrifices.

From instances such as this it is evident that sacrifices appear very much to have been either a blessing or a curse on occasion, due to their impact on the course of events. Yet there is no evidence to suggest that individuals ever considered overlooking these procedures entirely in order to save time and lives during a campaign, bar the instance we are provided with in Xenophon where the army was stranded with dwindling supplies.⁵¹⁷

These ritual procedures were customary and to ignore them would have led to accusations of impiety or unfortunate consequences. It was considered very disrespectful to the gods not to ask for their favour at such a pivotal time and it was considered that the safety of the army would have been jeopardised if a general had chosen to be impious by neglecting to perform the expected rituals.

Where the river crossing τὰ σφάγια is concerned, Pritchett observes the parallels between the blood-letting of τὰ σφάγια and the flow of water in rivers. As in the battle line τὰ σφάγια, where there is a parallel between the animal blood from the blood-letting as an acknowledgement of what was undoubtedly going to occur on the battlefield, perhaps in the case of the river crossing τὰ σφάγια there was a certain recognition of the misfortunes which might occur during a river crossing.⁵¹⁸ It might be that the blood of the animal was shed in the hope that this would appease the gods and protect the soldiers embarking across the river.

There has been a suggestion that τὰ σφάγια were intended to appease Ge with the blood of the victim rather than the blood of the combatants, and this notion might help to explain the practice.⁵¹⁹

In terms of interpretation where τὰ σφάγια were concerned, we know that the blood flowing from the victim was the main aspect of the ritual that was of interest. The colour, flow,

⁵¹⁷ Ibid. Consider the omen of the lunar eclipse forcing the Athenians to delay their retreat during the Sicilian Expedition, which resulted in such a catastrophic defeat. See 24 of introduction.

⁵¹⁸ Pritchett (1979a) III:83-87.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid. 86. See also Harrison (1980) 65.

clotting speed, direction and consistency of the blood would have all been items for consideration when searching for a divine message.⁵²⁰

Τὰ σφάγια was most certainly a brief ritual, yet it was an essential one nonetheless and these instances demonstrate the importance placed upon both forms of extispicy in a variety of contexts by the ancient Greeks. In addition, this chapter highlights further the importance of extispicy in comparison to other forms of divination. Arguably in terms of ritual practice, extispicy was most certainly the most prominent form of divination used by the ancient Greeks.

vii). Deities for dedication:

It is unclear from what evidence we have of sacrifices being performed before battle, departure and crossings whether there was an intended recipient for τὰ ἱερὰ and τὰ σφάγια. The obvious choices would be Zeus, Ares or Athena, but there is little evidence available to clarify whether this was the expected custom or not when performing sacrifices, especially on a military campaign.

Another very feasible option would be to consider that the recipient of military sacrifices may well have varied depending upon the geographical location of the army, such as the decision of the Spartan army to pray to Hera at the battle of Plataea because there was a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess near to where the army was drawn up for battle. In Herodotus' account we are told that after Pausanias prayed to the goddess the sacrifices immediately became favourable for them to engage in battle.⁵²¹

The use of τὰ σφάγια at river crossings to appease an unnamed (so we are led to believe) river deity does definitely have its parallels with the unnamed deity which the pre-battle τὰ σφάγια may have been hoping to appease. It is rather unusual that neither Athena nor Ares are mentioned at this critical point, and so we are forced to accept that we have no examples in the sources of this occurring. It seems to have been that there was either an

⁵²⁰ See Stengel (1896) 478-480 and Flower (2008b) 159-165.

⁵²¹ Hdt. IX:61-2. See Jameson (2014) 109-110 for a treatment of this battle.

unnamed deity (perhaps a long kept tradition) who was appeased, or that the subject deity was in fact so well known that it was not worth mentioning in the sources.

That said, the theory that it was Ge who was being appeased does seem quite feasible, and the fact that the same τὰ σφάγια ritual was observed where the appeasement of the river deity was concerned strikes a very interesting parallel. However, without further evidence in the sources to clarify this, this mystery is a difficult one to solve.⁵²²

viii). Divination as building morale:

It is arguably tempting for modern scholars to approach the topic of divination from a sceptical angle. The view that generals and politicians did not share the same pious beliefs as their troops, but were aware of the importance of divine assent to boost morale and to enable them to pursue their own personal agendas for both their own benefit and (in theory) the benefit of the city state, is not an old one. Consider Cyrus the Younger encouraging Xenophon to inform the troops that both τὰ ἱερά and τὰ σφάγια were favourable before the battle of Cunaxa. At this point it was crucial for Cyrus to have his army determined and focused, and the best way to do this was to tell them that the gods favoured their side.⁵²³

From the many examples cited above it is clear that divination in Ancient Greece played a very important role in the decision making process of everyday life and the role of independent diviners in city states while founding colonies and on the battlefield was pivotal, as they provided guidance and intuition in difficult situations that were most certainly not typical of everyday life.

The important point here is that it is clear that μάντιες possessed a real flexibility when it came to interpreting divine signs and this intuition as a part of their τέχνη enabled them to provide divine guidance for leaders facing difficult decisions, such as ‘is it auspicious to go to war?’ or ‘shall I engage in battle today?’ It seems clear that without μάντιες to provide guidance on such matters it would have been very difficult for the ancient Greeks of the

⁵²² For a recent discussion of this, see Jameson (2014) 104-106. See also, Lonis (1979) 109-110.

⁵²³ Xen. *Anab.* I:8.15. See also Flower (2008b) 159-165.

classical period especially to progress far at all with any important decision, as their extreme piety resulted in a need for divine reassurance before making any significant life choice. Undoubtedly there were a few individuals in positions of influence who on occasion manipulated these requirements to their benefit, the Spartan king Kleomenes, for example.⁵²⁴ Although these instances appear to have been in the minority, with those corrupt individuals usually being punished in the end for their impiety.⁵²⁵

Μάντεις were useful consultants to have on a military campaign for many reasons. Primarily, the simple fact that a specialist in divination was accompanying an expedition helped to appease any dissent amongst the troops. Secondly, because a general or a king was far more likely to choose an experienced military μάντις to accompany them on expedition, not only for their skills in interpretation but also because of their battle experience. Indisputably they would have been useful for planning military strategies.⁵²⁶ We know that Alexander on occasion consulted solely with his seers rather than his generals.⁵²⁷ Good morale depended upon the soldiers' assurances that the generals acted in accordance with the sacrifices.

ἦν δὲ δὴ καὶ τάττειν γνῶσιν ἐπιστάμενόν τε καὶ δυνάμενον παρασκευάζειν ὡς ἂν πλεον ἔχοιεν τῶν πολεμίων, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις κάκεῖνο λάβωσιν εἰς τὴν γνώμην, ὡς οὔτ' ἂν εἰκῆ οὔτ' ἄνευ θεῶν οὔτε παρὰ τὰ ἱερὰ ἠγήσαιτ' ἂν ἐπὶ πολεμίους, πάντα ταῦτα πιθανωτέρους τῷ ἄρχοντι τοὺς ἀρχομένους ποιεῖ.'

'If they recognize that he is an expert tactician as well, who knows how to deploy them so that they can get the better of the enemy, and if they also come to realize that he is not going to lead them against the enemy carelessly, or without having solicited the gods' goodwill, or when the sacrificial omens are unfavourable, this all helps to make the men in a commander's unit more ready to obey his orders.'⁵²⁸

⁵²⁴ Hdt. VI:66.1-3. See below for a discussion of the bribery of the Pythia at Delphi.

⁵²⁵ For more on corruption and bribery, see chapter V 184-186.

⁵²⁶ Consider the role of Hekas in the invasion of Eira. Paus. IV:21.7-8. See also chapter III 77-78.

⁵²⁷ For further discussion of this, see Flower (2008b) 179-180.

⁵²⁸ Xen. *Cav.* VI:6. tr. Waterfield 81.

Onasander states in his *Strategicus* that a general should always invite his officers to examine τὰ ἱερὰ so that they can pass on the news of an auspicious sacrifice to the soldiers. He observes that a favourable sacrifice can reassure a whole army and placate any individuals who might possess private misgivings.⁵²⁹

As noted previously, it was very common for the average soldier to have a working knowledge of ornithomancy, cledonmancy and oneiromancy, and it seems clear that the ancient Greeks were very attentive when it came to observing omens and other portents.

Thus in agreement with Xenophon and Onasander, it was very important that the army trusted in the pious nature of their general, as they would then be reassured that he would not lead them into danger without divine approval nor potentially manipulate or ignore omens and sacrifices.

When generals made the decision to invite other officials or even the soldiers in their army to witness the sacrifices, these were acts that helped to solidify the loyalty of troops to their general. However, let us not forget that the presence of a μάντις was not purely for the benefit of the troops.

We know that the vast majority of generals needed the advice of μάντιες to help them to make difficult decisions, as their skills were clearly required when it came to interpreting the divine messages from the gods. Consider Nicias' decision to remain at camp performing sacrifices after the lunar eclipse during the Sicilian Expedition.⁵³⁰ Granted it did not turn out to be the best decision for the army but it demonstrated that his own piety was influenced by the advice and interpretation of μάντιες just the same as an average soldier. It is far more likely that military commanders had the exact same religious scruples as the everyday individual Greek, but unfortunately on their heads rested the important decisions of military strategy, and on occasion the interpretations of μάντιες may have hindered rather than helped the decision making process in this area. That said if both the μάντις and the general believed that their

⁵²⁹ Onas. *Strat.* X:26.

⁵³⁰ Plut. *Nic.* 23-24; Thuc. VII:50.4.

decision was based on the will of the gods, then even if the results were not as they would have hoped, then this would have been divine will.⁵³¹

Consider the role of Thrasybulos in the overthrow of Thirty Tyrants at Athens. He knew that the μάντις had predicted victory if the bulk of the force waited until one of the number had died before attacking the enemy en masse. He believed the words of the seer to be true and so thrust himself forward into the enemy first, where he was killed, and arguably his sacrifice ensured victory for his troops, as they were then motivated not only to win in order to honour his memory, but arguably more importantly they fought harder to win in accordance with the prediction of the μάντις, once Thrasybulos had fallen.⁵³²

ix). The presence of μάντις:

Let us not forget that it was perfectly common for a μάντις to participate in battle, and often μάντις were hardened veterans. Consider Teisamenos and his five victories for the Spartans.⁵³³ So why are μάντις not always mentioned as present at sacrifices? Xenophon is an author who provides us with an insight into their involvement in these rituals, but often they are barely mentioned in the sources at all.

One of the more detailed and rare instances detailing the involvement of μάντις in sacrifices is found in Thucydides. During the Athenian invasion of Sicily we are told of an instance in which the μάντις brought out the customary victims and performed the necessary sacrifice. Once this was completed and (presumably) the positive affirmation was interpreted, the order was given for the infantry to charge.

‘καὶ πρῶτον μὲν αὐτῶν ἑκατέρων οἷ τε λιθοβόλοι καὶ σφενδονῆται καὶ τοξόται προυμάχοντο καὶ τροπὰς οἷας εἰκὸς ψιλοῦς ἀλλήλων ἐποίουν· ἔπειτα δὲ μάντις τε σφάγια προύφερον τὰ νομιζόμενα καὶ σαλπικταὶ ξύνοδον ἐπώτρυνον τοῖς ὀπλίταις.’

⁵³¹ See Goodman and Holladay (1986) 151-171.

⁵³² Xen. *Hell.* II:4.17-20.

⁵³³ Hdt. IX:33.

‘First the stone-throwers, slingers, and archers on both sides engaged each other in front of the main lines of battle, with now one party and now another having the advantage, as is normal with these light troops. Then soothsayers brought forward the usual victims for sacrifice and trumpeters sounded the charge to the hoplites.’⁵³⁴

What is worth highlighting in this passage is that this combat between opposing forces occurred before τὰ σφάγια were performed. This confirms that small skirmishes were permitted to occur between armies before the ‘troops proper’ engaged one another. This passage is important to the study of μάντις for two reasons. Primarily, because this passage actually confirms the presence of μάντις on the battlefield performing the necessary functions, although note that there is still insufficient information to tell us whether the μάντις performed the sacrifices personally or whether they had assistants. Nevertheless this passage is invaluable for providing evidence of μάντις directly on the battlefield.

The second important observation from this passage is that there were two μάντις present performing τὰ σφάγια. This supports the concept that there was usually more than one μάντις present on campaign in the event of a misfortune occurring for the primary μάντις, and as discussed in more detail previously, it is very unlikely that competing μάντις would work happily together and so it seems likely that any accompanying μάντις would be working in apprenticeship to the primary μάντις, and so again it would be highly likely that the accompanying μάντις were of the same mantic family as the primary μάντις, as the primary μάντις would not just share his mantic knowledge with any seer or other individual.

Xenophon’s level of detail where recording divination is concerned has proven invaluable. The fact that he informs us that the μάντις responsible for performing a sacrifice was called Arexion the Arcadian and he then continues to explain that Silanus the Ambraciot

⁵³⁴ Thuc. VI:69.1-2, tr. Warner.

had stolen away and abandoned the Greek force by this point is an important insight into the ancient Greek seer on campaign.⁵³⁵

The fact that Silanus abandoned the force is curious, yet this in itself is followed by the additional news that he was easily replaced by Arexion the Arcadian. This provides the reader with an understanding that a Greek army needed to travel with multiple seers, to ensure that there was one to hand in the absence of another. The likelihood was that Silanus was the main seer of choice to perform rituals right up until his abandonment of the Greek force, as is demonstrated by his presence in other areas of the *Anabasis*,⁵³⁶ then after his departure Arexion was brought to the forefront to take over in his stead.

Whether the two seers would have worked closely together up until that point is unclear, but this further highlights the importance of a μάντις on campaign, as a commander would not wish to find himself without one. This is even more crucial in the circumstances of the *Anabasis*, as the Greek force was so far away from home in Asia Minor; it is doubtful that a Greek seer was an easy commodity to come by in such a location.

The fact that we are also told in Plutarch's *Life of Themistokles* that the seer Euphrantides was present at τὰ ἱερὰ sacrifice before the battle of Salamis demonstrates the importance of seers, as Plutarch felt it necessary to record the name of the seer assigned to Themistokles during that battle.

We know that seers were often sent on campaign with commanders; whether they were selected by the city state after they had made a decision to gather a force or whether the seer was the personal μάντις of that particular general is not always clear. Pairings of generals with trusted seers were not uncommon, Nicias and Stilbides worked together until the seer's death shortly before the Sicilian Expedition and Plutarch especially endeavours to provide us with the names of the μάντιες working closely with these historic characters.⁵³⁷

⁵³⁵ Xen. *Anab.* IV:3.8-9. See Kett (1966) 24-25 for Arexion and 69-70 for Silanus. For further discussion of Silanus' character, see Raphals (2013) 253-254.

⁵³⁶ Xen. *Anab.* I:7.18; V:6.18.

⁵³⁷ For more discussions of partnerships between generals and seers, see chapter III 82-89. See also, Flower (2008b) 176-183.

What is important here is that from these accounts preserving the names of independent diviners conducting the sacrifice we now know that this was the role of a μάντις on campaign. Therefore, it is clear that just because an author does not feel the need to mention all who were present at a sacrifice, that does not mean that we should assume that a μάντις was not present at most if not all of the sacrifices that we are informed of in historical accounts of military campaigns. If an author informs us that a general performed a sacrifice, the likelihood is that a seer was also present performing that sacrifice on behalf of the general and interpreting the message from the gods in the entrails, to ensure that an accurate interpretation was received.

x). Demand characteristics:

What is evident from the sources is that μάντιες acquired their τέχνη independently of oracular centres and official institutions. It seems that the standard practice was for an apprentice μάντις to shadow another μάντις within the same mantic family in order to learn how to apply the art of μαντική to everyday life and in addition to learn the τέχνη with the aim of preparing for life as a working μάντις either within a city state, on military campaign or as part of an expedition to found a colony.⁵³⁸

Undoubtedly the art of μαντική was not uniform. It is highly unlikely that μάντιες shared the knowledge of their τέχνη with other μάντιες from rival mantic families and so inevitably different interpretations of various omens and occurrences in the entrails would have developed over time due to individual elucidation. This would surely have had some sort of ripple effect in terms of one μάντις passing down to another μάντις slight variations of what they had originally learnt, and it would be very unlikely that these changes to an interpretation would be remotely cohesive.

That said there is little evidence in the sources to suggest that there was such a drastic shift in information sharing within mantic families that caused polar opposite interpretations

⁵³⁸ For more on colonisation, see chapter III.

to arise. Xenophon was able to observe sacrifices alongside the μάντεις in service to him and his army and he does not describe an instance in which a disagreement of interpretation occurred amongst the those present or with him personally in contrast to the μάντεις, although arguably this would not occur anyway because the μάντεις working together would most likely have come from the same mantic family.

In addition, if Xenophon or others learned their knowledge from working with the same family of seers, then it is also likely that they observed the same possible interpretations and so there was never an occasion when a disagreement would have arisen from the results of a sacrifice or an interpretation of omens.

For the most part, it seems that there was a consistent agreement in the interpretation of sacrifices, in the fact that if a basic understanding of sacrificial interpretations was common knowledge, then this at least would be universal. That said it would be naive to conclude that a disagreement between μάντεις has never occurred where interpretation was concerned: the issue that we have is that at present there are no instances preserved in the sources to testify to this.

It is important to consider what sort of impact an occurrence like this would have had on campaign. It is likely that a variance in interpretation would have meant that one μάντις had misinterpreted the message. It was not possible for there to be two opposite meanings apparent in omens or entrails and so whoever had misinterpreted the message was at fault as an individual.

As previously observed, it would have been the individual who was fallible in his interpretation of the message, the validity of the message itself was never questioned. Hence whichever outcome eventually arose would prove one μάντις to have been incorrect. Thus the issue of conflicting messages would be resolved, and the likelihood would then be that the erroneous μάντις would no longer be consulted and the correct μάντις would become the leading authority.

Whatever the method used to obtain the information, we know that divination was pivotal to the Greek city states during the classical period and the need for a talented seer is evident in many accounts of historical events from the ancient Greek world.

xi). Receiving and interpreting the message:

There is a noticeable difference in methods of divination when comparing both mythical and historical μάντις. In myth there seems to have been more of an element of communication between either the deities directly or their messengers, i.e. animals, and μάντις. Some seers from myth understood divine messages from listening to bird song, like Melampus and Teiresias.⁵³⁹

Another area of μαντική that needs to be explored further is the occurrence of divination by divine inspiration (or natural divination as Cicero refers to it), and under this category he allocates dreams and frenzy. These two categories of divination have been grouped together because they are both types of inspired divination. Granted, in most instances these types of divination both required interpretation of some kind, but the message itself was sent to the enquirer or vessel by the gods directly rather than via other media first, such as a weather occurrence or the behaviour of a particular bird. Mantic frenzy is a very interesting method of divination as it does not seem to have visited many individuals in the same way that anyone can have a dream.

We know from the sources that individuals capable of mantic frenzy were most frequently already in the service of the gods in one way or another, whether that was in a priestly capacity at a temple or an oracular centre or as an independent diviner, although instances of historical independent diviners experiencing mantic frenzy are few and far between.

When approaching the topic of divine inspiration and mantic frenzy often the first example to spring to mind is that of the Pythia at Delphi. Her role as the vessel of Apollo has

⁵³⁹ For further information on Melampus see also Johnston (2008) 109-125. For Teiresias, see Ugolini (1991) 9-36. For further reading on Teiresias, see Brisson (1988).

resulted in many depictions of a crazed woman rocking upon a tripod and uttering gibberish, which was then translated by the other religious officials present and reworded into a coherent oracular response in hexameter verse for the enquirer. Debates over how accurate a portrayal this really is have remained a common feature of modern scholarship.⁵⁴⁰

Divine inspiration does not necessarily imply that the individual was inhabited by the god: the understanding seems to have been more that the god physically endeavoured to connect with the enquirer directly by communicating within that particular individual's mind; whether that was in the form of sending a dream while they slept or by providing them with a waking vision of some kind.

It is indicated in the sources that some μάντις of myth were able to see or hear something divine that those present could not, and that this divine message was then repeated or interpreted as required to the intended recipient to convey the gods' will, but it must be emphasised that in most instances this was not considered to be mantic frenzy and so not necessarily inspired divination. Instead, it was understood that these specialists were closer to the gods and so were able to observe and understand messages that were not always apparent to the everyday Greek.⁵⁴¹

In contrast to this, the μάντις of the fifth century relied upon omens, portents and entrails to convey the will of the gods. There was no element of direct communication present; instead it was the role of μάντις to either observe or find the message wherever it was veiled in the entrails or in the surrounding environment and to interpret the message into a recommendation for the enquirer.

In terms of divination by signs, we know that the ability to recognise omens when they occurred was clearly crucial for a μάντις, and of course the ability to interpret these omens was essential. As discussed in chapter II we know that the mantic art was considered in some

⁵⁴⁰ See Fontenrose (1978) 196-227, Parke & Wormell (1956) I and Price (1985) 128-154.

⁵⁴¹ Consider Teiresias observing the flight and behaviour of birds and presenting his observations to Creon in Soph. *Ant.* 999-1000. See also above 119.

ways to be innate, that a member of a famous mantic family possessed some sort of natural ability which predisposed them towards this sort of divine work.⁵⁴²

We know that within mantic families the trade secrets as such were passed on from teacher to student and so remained both exclusive and mysterious in many ways to the average individual. That said we also know that some more ‘standard’ divine occurrences were frequent enough for their interpretation to be known by others who were not officially practising μάντις, for example, Kimon and the missing lobe.⁵⁴³

This is evident in the treatment of divination in the ancient sources and the accounts that we have of instances where good or bad omens were readily recognised en masse by those present and interpreted and acknowledged, and these instances may have occurred when a μάντις was not always necessarily present.

One rather sceptical implication in the sources is the passage in the *Anabasis* where Xenophon states that there was a need for a general to possess a basic knowledge at least of the mantic art so that if occasion demanded it he could either perform his own sacrifice or bear witness to those performed by a μάντις with a knowledgeable eye.⁵⁴⁴ As Dover notes:

‘The general must go to his experts, the seers, and when he has listened to their interpretation he must decide whether to trust them and act on their advice, risking disaster if they turn out to be mistaken, or to defy and overrule them, trusting in his own judgement and risking punishment from gods and men if the seers prove to have understood the divine intention correctly.’⁵⁴⁵

Perhaps if the enquirer was hoping to embark upon a more hazardous form of action than that approved of by the gods, and in turn a μάντις, then there would perhaps be an opportunity for the μάντις to interpret the omens as unfavourable towards a particular course of action, and if

⁵⁴² See chapter II 44-48.

⁵⁴³ Plut. *Kim.* 18. See above 132-133 for previous discussion of this passage.

⁵⁴⁴ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29. See Raphals (2013) 252-255 for further discussion of Xenophon and consulting seers.

⁵⁴⁵ Dover (1972) 64. See introduction 14-16 for a discussion on independent diviners aiding the decision making process. Yet what Dover emphasises here would surely have added pressure to the general or king.

this was coincidentally to the benefit of the μάντις, then those present could not complain as clearly this was the divine will of the gods.⁵⁴⁶

However, if the knowledge of μαντική was becoming more accessible by the fifth century B.C. then this would have been a lot harder to achieve, especially (as highlighted above) if the scrutinised entrails possessed a sign that could be very clearly interpreted in a manner that was contrary to the independent will of the μάντις.⁵⁴⁷

Whether this was Xenophon's intention is unclear and the sources do not provide as many instances of corrupt μάντις as one might hope to shed further light on this; perhaps the underlying meaning of this passage is more that Xenophon felt that it was important for a general to have a working knowledge of sacrificial interpretations so that he might be able to perform the necessary sacrifices in the absence of a μάντις.

Thus ensuring that if a μάντις or the standard accompanying μάντις were killed on campaign the army would then still be able to continue on their expedition, as the general could continue to perform the sacrifices until another μάντις could be sourced to replace the no longer present predecessors.

If there was some sort of impious activity occurring in terms of divination and the corrupted μάντις continued to misinterpret the divine signs, then the impression given in the ancient sources is that their corruption would be revealed and that they would eventually be held responsible and punished for their actions.

A key example of this which would undoubtedly have caused a scandal at the time was the discovery that the Spartan king Kleomenes had bribed the Pythia at Delphi to state that Demaratus was not of the true Heraklid bloodline. This resulted in Demaratus being forced into exile from Sparta and losing his position as king. The corruption at Delphi was eventually discovered and the Pythia in turn lost her position as result of this.⁵⁴⁸ What is interesting from this account is that this discovery merely disgraced the Pythia concerned for being susceptible

⁵⁴⁶ Consider how Silanus was not entirely trustworthy. See Raphals (2013) 253-254.

⁵⁴⁷ Bowden (2005) 5 notes that anyone was capable of learning the principles of reading livers.

⁵⁴⁸ Hdt. VI:66.1-3. See also Hollmann (2005) 283.

to corruption. It does not seem that the scandal affected the popularity and use of the Delphic oracle remotely. This demonstrates that in this particular instance it was the fraudulent individual who was deemed to be at fault and not the system of divination itself.

Faith in divination was not shaken at all, because whenever an instance of corruption was discovered, it seems more that the understanding was that the fact that these individuals were discovered as dishonest proves that the gods were unwilling to accept corruption in their religious practices, and so the shame of discovery and the loss of one's prominent religious status was often punishment enough for the offence of corruption.⁵⁴⁹

If an individual was found to be dishonest, this did not cause the accusers to question whether the process of divination was constantly fabricated in the same way: they just understood that the corrupt individual had neglected to use their natural skills and had instead fabricated a response or interpretation for their own personal gain.

Consider the χρησμολόγος Onomacritos, who we are informed in Herodotus was caught forging an oracle to suggest that the island of Lesbos would be swallowed by the sea. As he was publicly disgraced for this, no doubt his rival Lasos of Hermione was responsible for besmirching his name after catching him in the act of falsifying the oracle; Onomacritos was then exiled from Athens.⁵⁵⁰

What is noteworthy from this account in Herodotus is that Onomacritos fled to Persia after he was driven from Athens by the Peisistratids, but once they too had been ejected from Athens, they went to Persia and after reconciling began working with Onomacritos to turn the thoughts of Darius I towards invading Athens.⁵⁵¹

It seems that the Peisistratids ejected Onomacritos when it suited them or perhaps when public opinion forced them to do so, but once they found themselves in a weakened position, they abandoned their religious scruples and worked with the χρησμολόγος so that they might return to Athens.

⁵⁴⁹ See Eidinow (2014) 84-85 for examples of greed from μάνταις.

⁵⁵⁰ See Hdt. VII:6.

⁵⁵¹ Hdt. VII:6.4-5. See also Sancisi-Weerdenburg (2000) 72-73.

This account is quite striking in the fact that it informs us that Hippias at least was not the most scrupulous of individuals, or else he would not have worked again with someone like Onomacritos, who according to Herodotus had been proven to be a corrupt religious specialist.⁵⁵²

The other area of difficulty for a μάντις, which is perhaps overlooked, is what a μάντις should do if presented with continually bad responses. Undoubtedly there would be a large amount of pressure upon a μάντις to interpret a message favourably to enable the army either to move on or to engage in battle. If this did not occur then surely this would put not only the general, but also the μάντις, in a very difficult position.

Would a μάντις be tempted if not observed by one with knowledge of μαντική to give an incorrect interpretation, if they believed that this would save the life of a starving army, for example? It must have been very difficult to continue to provide an answer which was not desired, especially to a large number of worried individuals.

That said we know from other instances (such as that of the inauspicious border sacrifices that prevented a Spartan force from crossing into Argive territory during the Peloponnesian war)⁵⁵³ that generals and kings were willing to end campaigns and disband armies as a result of an unpropitious sacrifice, if the impious alternative could portend disaster for the force.

The will of the gods was paramount when it came to a military expedition and it was considered to be suicide for a general to continue with his campaign if the sacrifices spelt disaster. Yet for certain scenarios this may have not been feasible, as for Xenophon in the *Anabasis* where they were running out of provisions but the sacrifices would not permit them to pack up camp and move on.⁵⁵⁴

Giving up altogether was not an option here, as it was the generals' responsibility to ensure that the mercenary army made it back to Greece, and so the Greek army was forced to

⁵⁵² See chapter III 136 for the attitude of the Peisistratids towards divination. See also Shapiro (1990) 335-345.

⁵⁵³ Thuc. V:116.

⁵⁵⁴ Xen. *Anab.* VI:4.9-5.7.

remain and continue sacrificing until the sacrifices were propitious. Perhaps it is experience of situations where falsification or misinterpretation of the entrails occurred that warranted Xenophon to emphasise the importance of a general understanding more about μαντική.

Irrespective of the difficulty that it may present, we may take it that the majority of pious generals would rather have heard a correct interpretation than one that presented dangers of its own for ignoring divine will.

In 349. B.C. Phokion was sent out to Euboia with a small force from Athens to subdue the tyrants in support of Philip. We are told in Plutarch's account that he delayed engaging the enemy while performing τὰ σφάγια, but it is unclear as to whether this was because the omens were inauspicious or because he wished to draw the enemy nearer. This is an interesting passage as Plutarch refers to the performance of τὰ σφάγια before battle, but does not mention the presence of a μάντις.⁵⁵⁵

In my opinion this does not mean that a μάντις was not present to perform the sacrifice, as we know that the presence of a μάντις on military campaign was essential. It seems far more likely that Plutarch did not necessarily know the name of the accompanying μάντις on this campaign, and so instead he decided not to include mention of the μάντις. Either that or the μάντις was not necessarily a renowned man, in which case Plutarch would perhaps have found him unworthy of mention, as we know how Plutarch enjoyed to record the feats of great men. If the μάντις was decidedly unknown then perhaps his presence here was not deemed of particular interest or relevance to the historical account of events.

There are two main details in this account that I feel should be highlighted, firstly the fact that Phokion took great effort to perform τὰ σφάγια, even though the enemy were perhaps considered to be too close for comfort. Not only did he ensure that he performed τὰ σφάγια, he also took time and great care with the sacrificial process.

⁵⁵⁵ Plut. *Phok.* 13. See also Jameson (2014) 109.

Now, as Plutarch has stated, this could have been for one of two purposes: either he wished to draw the enemy even closer, or he could not obtain the affirmative sacrifice that he needed in order to engage the enemy. Irrespective of the objective, it is interesting that τὰ σφάγια were the activity that took precedence in this particular situation. It is very clear in the sources that a ritual practice such as the need to perform τὰ σφάγια before imminent battle was of the utmost importance on the ancient Greek battlefield and so an advancing army would understand this to be the typical behaviour of an enemy Greek force.

Another interesting feature of this account is the fact that Phokion's accompanying general Plutarchos decided to ignore Phokion's endeavours with τὰ σφάγια and jumped forward to attack the enemy without the official divine assent (not to mention the agreement of Phokion, according to Plutarch) and we know from Plutarch's account that he was later punished for this. Plutarch informs us that his main motivation for action this was that he had misinterpreted Phokion's delay for cowardice, but it seems surprising that he would not have understood the need to wait for divine approval before engaging in battle, unless he had expected τὰ σφάγια to have been already completed by this juncture.

This chapter has provided us with a clear understanding of what methods of divination were available to independent diviners from myth through to the end of the classical period. The next chapter will explore the treatment and depiction of seers in the ancient sources, so that we might better understand the social standing and reception of independent diviners at this time.

Chapter V

Reception of The Role

One of the biggest challenges with scrutinising independent diviners within a city state is how difficult it is to put together a clear idea of how they were perceived and treated. It is problematic to achieve this successfully, as we are solely reliant upon the surviving evidence and there are clear difficulties with interpreting written sources and trying to infer from them what precisely public opinion would have been at this time from these accounts.⁵⁵⁶

That said, any mention of independent diviners in the sources must be treasured, no matter how minor, as each mention contributes towards building a valuable perspective on how these individuals were perceived and treated, and this in turn can help us to better understand them as professional practitioners of their τέχνη. At least in this respect, we should be thankful for the written evidence which has been preserved and for the fact that (for the most part) it is so readily available for consultation and scrutiny.

Before progressing further down this particular avenue of enquiry it is worth attempting to clarify ancient Greek attitudes towards divination during this period especially, as it is clear that popular opinion would have impacted upon independent diviners as specialists in this area. It is important to try to understand the outlook of the ancient Greeks on this subject as well, before attempting to delve any further into their understanding of how divination was practised and their thoughts on the individual specialists behind the μαντική.

i). Recording divination – Greek attitudes:

The simplest, and yet most important observation, which cannot be emphasised enough when it comes to exploring accounts of divination in the ancient sources, is the fact

⁵⁵⁶ For more on the difficulty of using ancient writers, see 7-9 of the introduction. The introduction to Mikalson (1983) 6-10 outlines the challenges of attempting to glean religious views from written sources.

that the vast majority of contemporary authors of ancient Greece (more notably for the purposes of this study those of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.) felt the need at some point in their works to record oracles or portents, which foretold the outcomes of key historical events.

This is perhaps an observation which is purely stating the obvious, but in my opinion this is still worth highlighting as it emphasises the importance of divination in Greek society. Even Thucydides, who some consider took little interest in divination, still felt it necessary in certain instances to record details of sacrifices performed, such as the interpretations of the μάντεις who accompanied Nicias during the Sicilian Expedition, although this will be treated in greater detail later in this chapter.⁵⁵⁷

Herodotus is a particularly useful author when it comes to the subject of divination, as he cites instances in which aspects of divination or oracles themselves are manipulated by corrupt individuals.⁵⁵⁸ That said his work is a clear example of a Greek author who favoured divination, because even with his knowledge of forgeries and corruption he still believed in the fundamental systems of divination and prophecy as they stood at the time.⁵⁵⁹

Another interesting point worth noting is that there are instances in some sources (Xenophon in particular) where there was a tendency to state that a sacrifice was offered, without specifying whether an independent diviner was present or not. This is an insight in itself as to how seers were perceived at the time.⁵⁶⁰ Clearly many authors found it unnecessary to point out the presence of a religious specialist, as it seems to have been accepted standard practice that such an individual was most certainly required.

When searching for examples of the effect of ancient Greek religious belief upon the people we do not need to look far. The effect of divine occurrences upon those who witnessed them is evident in many accounts of fifth and fourth century B.C. events. One clear example

⁵⁵⁷ Plut. *Nic.* 12; Thuc. VI:12.2-19.1. See Herman (1989) 83-93.

⁵⁵⁸ Hdt. VI:66 and VII:6 for instances of corrupt individuals involved in divination. See also 184-186.

⁵⁵⁹ Hdt. VIII:77 where Herodotus defends the oracles of Bakis.

⁵⁶⁰ Hdt. VII:134.2, IX: 19.2; Thuc. V:54.2, 55.3, 116.1; Xen. *Anab.* III:5.18, IV:3.9, IV:6.23, IV:6.27, IV:8.25-6, V:1.1, V:3.9, V:3.13 to cite but a few instances.

is from Xenophon where we have the clear omen of a sneeze recorded.⁵⁶¹ The sneeze was understood to be a clear sign from the gods and had to be treated as such. The fact that all reacted in such a way proves how important divination was to the ancient Greeks: looking for signs was a part of everyday life as it was essential for messages from the gods to be witnessed and interpreted.

This is also an interesting example of a clear omen which did not require the interpretation of an independent diviner. It seems that their presence was required for the more complex instances which were more open to interpretation and difficult to discern.

There is also an instance in the *Iliad* when Odysseus witnessed a heron sent by Athene which crossed his path on the right and although it was dark this was indicated to him by its cry to show that the goddess was in favour of his undertaking.⁵⁶² This was instantly recognised as a good omen by Odysseus without the need of an independent diviner. As discussed in chapter IV a bird flying by on your right hand side was understood to be a fortunate omen: this seems to have been common knowledge as demonstrated by its mention in several texts.⁵⁶³

What is fortunate about the sources which we have describing fifth and fourth century B.C. events is that even the structure of their works can be very informative, as they can provide us with an insight into how important they, as authors, deemed divination and its role in Greek society, alongside the clear opportunity to examine the opinions presented in the texts of independent diviners and their μαντική. This is even more important for the contemporary sources, as they can give us a far more accurate idea as to what Greek attitudes might have been at the time. The amount of attention paid to divination in their works can be revealing in itself.

Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides, Xenophon and Plato are especially informative sources. Aristophanes is a particularly informative source for the classical period, as we know

⁵⁶¹ Xen. *Anab.* III:2.9, For the Roman understanding of sneezing as an omen, see Catullus. *No.* 45. 8-9, 17-19. See also chapter IV 123-127.

⁵⁶² Hom. *Il.* X:254.

⁵⁶³ Pollard (1977) 121.

that his comedies were successful in Athens at the time and his jokes about independent diviners must have been well received, as he mocks them in more than one play.⁵⁶⁴

Sophocles' tragedies are very informative in the fact that they send a very clear message to the audience that it is foolish for a king or general to ridicule a seer, as in all instances this does not bode well for them. Oedipus is a prime example of this and Creon is punished for not heeding the advice of the seer Teiresias when he should have done.⁵⁶⁵

It is evident that all mortals should be aware that it is crucial to heed the gods and the messages interpreted by seers are the only way to gauge divine will. Aeschylus' *Persians* is a fascinating play as it is based on historical events rather than myth. It is set in the Persian court where all are anticipating news of Xerxes on his campaign in Greece.

The messenger arrives with devastating news of a Persian defeat by the unified Hellenic force and the play climaxes in Xerxes' arrival back at court in rags, completely ruined by his army's destruction. In this play we have accounts of dreams and omens clearly sending a message to the characters that Xerxes' campaign would be unsuccessful, but the participants on the Persian side are blind to these signs in their lust for conquest and victory.⁵⁶⁶

Often in the texts we find that signs possess a true meaning which is hidden from the enquirer until it is too late, and this is a common formula utilised by ancient Greek sources in their accounts of events. They especially feature frequently in Herodotus to demonstrate that there were souls who were inescapably doomed, as they were unable to observe and interpret the signs correctly in order to avoid their fate.⁵⁶⁷

That said, in these particular accounts of Herodotus it is very rarely the seer who chooses the incorrect action. The situation is usually one of three possibilities. Either, there is no seer present and so the enquirer is forced to either make his own interpretation or base his

⁵⁶⁴ For a discussion of Diopethes and Lampon in the plays of Aristophanes, see Hose (1940) 92-93.

⁵⁶⁵ Soph. *OT.*; *Ant.* 988-1110. See García Gual (1975) 107-132 and Ugolini (1991) 9-36 for an exploration of the character and representation of Teiresias. See also Roisman (2003) 1-20 for Teiresias in both Soph. *OT.* and Sen. *Oed.*

⁵⁶⁶ For Atossa's dream see Aesch. *Per.* 176-195, for Xerxes' arrival in rags see Aesch. *Per.* 909.

⁵⁶⁷ Croesus in Herodotus is a classic example after he incorrectly interpreted an oracular response from Delphi. See Hdt. I:75-83. See also, Lattimore (1939) 24-35.

interpretation on the advice of other non-specialists,⁵⁶⁸ or the enquirer has a certain action or path suggested by a seer and chooses to ignore the advice given.⁵⁶⁹

The final scenario is where the seer and in some instances also the enquirer go willingly to their fate, but this is not exactly the same as it is not purely an instance in which something has been misinterpreted. The signs are correct and have predicted death or destruction in some shape or form, and this prognosis has been accepted by the seer and the enquirer.⁵⁷⁰ There are of course exceptions to this concept.

We know from Xenophon's *Anabasis* of the time when he was stranded with dwindling supplies because the sacrifices were not propitious towards striking camp. This created a terrible conflict of interest as if τὰ ἱερά continued to suggest that it was unwise to depart from camp then the Greek force was very likely to starve; then again, if the omens were ignored after being correctly interpreted as unfavourable this had consequences of its own.

We know from Xenophon's account that when a party decided to ignore the bad omens and depart from camp in search of food they were ambushed by the enemy and trapped away from camp. This of course generated a dilemma as Xenophon could not assist the group without disobeying those same omens and so he continued to sacrifice requesting permission to help the group and was fortunate enough to eventually receive propitious omens. He then rescued his colleagues and returned to camp.⁵⁷¹

What is interesting from this passage is that there does not appear to be a limit to the number of sacrifices that one can perform in a day and so surely depending upon resources (i.e. does one have a bountiful supply of animals to offer?) one could be tempted to sacrifice perpetually until one receives the desired response. I am guessing that lack of resources prevented this from occurring alongside the issue that not every situation produced an endless window of opportunity to wait for the desired outcome.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ Consider Hegesistratos ignoring τὰ ἱερά. See Hdt IX:41.

⁵⁷⁰ Leonidas and Megistias are a prime example of this. See Hdt. VII:219-220.

⁵⁷¹ Xen. *Anab.* VI:4.9-5.7. For a discussion of the religious requirements for setting out for war, see Rawlings (2007) 187-190.

As detailed previously τὰ ἱερὰ were often performed on the day of or not long before battle, whilst τὰ σφάγια were performed immediately before battle was due to commence. If the sacrifices were unfavourable at either of these junctures, it is very likely that on the vast majority of occasions there was hardly ample opportunity to query an unpropitious sacrifice and question the gods again.

ii). The presentation and reception of independent diviners:

Μάντεις appear to have been received within the Greek city state with respect and reverence. Evidence from inscriptions in instances where a μάντις has been killed in battle shows the name of the μάντις to be near the top of the casualty list along with the expedition commanders; additionally, there are several instances where statues of seers were erected. Lysander dedicated a statue of himself and his seer Agias to Delphi to mark his victory at Aigospotamoi, in addition there was also a statue of Agias erected in the marketplace at Sparta.⁵⁷²

The fact that μάντεις were sought out as an essential addition to a military campaign or group of colonists demonstrates their importance in those areas of Greek life especially. In the absence of an official method of consultation in the form of an oracular centre such as Delphi, a μάντις and his or her skills in divination was the next best alternative and a far more accessible resource. This is due to the fact that a μάντις was present on campaign or travelling in order to interpret portents as and when they occurred.

We know from the sources of certain μάντεις who were able to earn fortune and high status for their services because of their good reputation; often this was also related to their link to one of the famous mantic families. Lampon is a prime example of a successful μάντις; he was invited to dine in the Prytaneion, he was sent as one of the leading members of a colony to Thurii and he was a close friend of Perikles.

⁵⁷² Paus. X:9.7; III:11.5. For Agias, see Kett (1966) 20 and Roth (1982) 268-269.

Some of his influence was of no doubt because of his role as a prominent politician in Athens, yet he was clearly well known for his skills in divination also.⁵⁷³ The fact that Lampon appeared in a play by Aristophanes as a character and the fact that he was ridiculed by Aristophanes demonstrates that he was a well-known public figure in Athens. The same is applicable to the seer Hierocles, as his prominence seems to almost guarantee the likelihood of ridicule at the hands of Aristophanes.⁵⁷⁴

It seems clear that Aristophanes would have chosen leading members of state to mock as it would be received better by the audience if they were laughing at a privileged aristocrat from a higher class, especially if they had some sort of preliminary knowledge of the ridiculed individual in question. Of course what is noteworthy from Aristophanes' comedies is that on occasion independent diviners are referred to as both χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις and it is because of this that Aristophanes' work is often scrutinised as part of the debate as to whether the roles of χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις were synonymous.⁵⁷⁵ The plays of Aristophanes are very useful when attempting to get an idea of the 'popular mood' in Athens during this period. Comments made by Aristophanes' characters are often quite revealing.

For example, in Aristophanes' *Birds*, the term *Thuriomanteis* first appears. This word has been interpreted to refer to those μάντεις who accompanied the mixed colony of Athenians and other Greek states to Thurii, one of whom was Lampon. During the Peloponnesian War the colony revolted from Athens and was no longer considered to be an Athenian colony.

It seems from what accounts we have in the sources that this was a topic of sadness in Athens: perhaps the fact that Aristophanes criticises these *Thuriomanteis* implies that in some respects they may well have been culpable in some way or another.

Euripides was another author who seems to have been rather suspicious of seers. At least this opinion seems to be rather prevalent in his works. It is unsurprising if Euripides was rather sceptical of seers and perhaps even divination. We know from other contemporaries

⁵⁷³ See Flower (2008b) 123-4.

⁵⁷⁴ Aristoph. *Birds*. 332;532b; *Peace* 1084-5.

⁵⁷⁵ For further information on the history of this debate and for a new perspective, see chapter I 21-27.

that he was an individual with rather strange views. Aristophanes goes so far as to include him as a character in his play *The Frogs* in which he demonstrates all sorts of unfamiliar religious beliefs, including not believing in the standard pantheon of the Olympian gods.

I am sure that this was an unusual portrayal of Euripides' character on the part of Aristophanes, but it still gives us an insight into how he was perceived as an individual and this can give us some assistance when considering how seriously certain phrases about seers in his works would have been received by his audiences.

Another contrary example to the reverence usually afforded to μάντιες is found in Plato. It seems clear from this passage that he considered μάντιες to be manipulative and greedy.

‘ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντιες ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὡς ἔστι παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν ποριζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπαδαῖς, εἴτε τι ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκεῖσθαι μεθ' ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἐορτῶν, ἐάν τέ τινα ἐχθρὸν πημῆναι ἐθέλη, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ βλάψει ἐπαγωγαῖς τισιν καὶ καταδέσμοις, τοὺς θεοὺς, ὡς φασιν, πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν’

‘and begging priests and soothsayers go to rich men's doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors, and that if a man wishes to harm an enemy, at slight cost he will be enabled to injure just and unjust alike, since they are masters of spells and enchantments that constrain the gods to serve their end.’⁵⁷⁶

This opinion expressed by Plato appears to have been the view of a minority, although it has been observed that Thucydides was an author who did not pay much attention to independent diviners and divination, and this is evident in his frequent omissions where the role of independent diviners is concerned during the Peloponnesian War.

Where the more famous Athenian strategoi of the fifth century B.C. are concerned, we know for certain that the majority of them had independent diviners either directly in their

⁵⁷⁶ Plat. *Rep.* 364b-c. Flower (2008b) 29.

service or working actively in their inner circle and that their interpretations of divine occurrences were pivotal in the decision making process.⁵⁷⁷ Xenophon was scolded by Socrates for the way he approached the Delphic Oracle when he was debating joining the 10,000 mercenaries in Asia Minor because of how he formatted his question to ask Apollo:

‘ἐλθὼν δ’ ὁ Ξενοφῶν ἐπήρετο τὸν Ἀπόλλω τίτι ἂν θεῶν θύων καὶ εὐχόμενος κάλλιστα καὶ ἄριστα ἔλθοι τὴν ὁδὸν ἣν ἐπινοεῖ καὶ καλῶς πράξας σωθεῖη. καὶ ἀνεῖλεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἀπόλλων θεοῖς οἷς ἔδει θύειν.’

‘Xenophon went there and asked Apollo the following question: ‘To what God shall I pray and sacrifice in order that I may best and most honourably go on the journey I have in mind, and return home safe and successful?’⁵⁷⁸

Socrates informed Xenophon that what he should have asked the god was whether it was auspicious to join the campaign in the first place as the way he put the question to the god demonstrated that he had already made his own decision and forced the god to accede. To our knowledge these sorts of leading questions were not standard practice, and it is surprising that Xenophon was willing to approach the oracle in such a way considering how pious he appears in his works. The fact that he is one of our best sources for his recording of sacrifices and religious rites it seems odd that he would consider meddling with the system.

As far as we are able to interpret, it seems clear that the ancient Greeks considered their relationship with the gods to be mutually beneficial, the mortals worshiped the deities and honoured them through prayer, ritual and sacrifice and in return the deities rewarded those who they favoured with divine messages. The challenge for mortals was whether they possessed the ability to recognise and interpret these signs.

One theme which is constant throughout historical accounts is that of divine retribution upon those who either disregard the omens or avoid the process of a consultation entirely. It is for this reason that in the vast majority of cases when interpretations are made

⁵⁷⁷ Nicias and Stilbides are the first pair to spring to mind in this instance. See chapter III 82-89.

⁵⁷⁸ Xen. *Anab.* III:1.6, tr. Warner.

of a divine message the general or king will follow the advice of the independent diviner without question.

ii.a). The Sicilian Expedition:

The Sicilian Expedition was arguably one of the most revealing events of the fifth century in terms of demonstrating Greek attitudes to divination. The Athenian general Nicias was well known for his piety and his μάντις Stilbides accompanied him on excursions and advised him on all matters. Thucydides and Plutarch inform us that the Athenians were drawn to the idea of conquering Sicily initially by the ambition of Alcibiades, but also by the plethora of seers and oracles which emerged at the time promising success to the Athenian Expedition. We know that Nicias was not in favour of the expedition, but that he was employed to lead the force alongside Alcibiades as the Athenians trusted Nicias' cautious nature to temper the ambitious nature of Alcibiades.⁵⁷⁹

The expedition was one of the most unsuccessful and unfortunate events in Athenian history. Of an initial force sent of roughly sixty to seventy thousand men, very few returned to Athens. There is a pivotal moment in the campaign which was a turning point for Athenian disaster and that was the decision of Nicias to remain camped in Syracuse for a full lunar cycle in the aftermath of a lunar eclipse.⁵⁸⁰ This decision gave the Syracusans the opportunity to blockade the harbour and prevent the Athenians from escaping. Now in this situation there are two main individuals who can be blamed for this decision, firstly, Nicias as the individual who held the final decision in his lap.

Certainly he could take the advice of the μάντις under consideration, but it was by no means expected that a general should always heed the words of a μάντις as gospel; it was their job to take the interpretation of a μάντις under consideration and to make an informed decision on the best course of action. That said, arguably the μάντις was responsible for providing such an interpretation in the first place. The difficulty with this situation was that Nicias' trusted

⁵⁷⁹ Plut. *Nic.* 12; Thuc. VI:12.2-19.1.

⁵⁸⁰ See 24-25 of the introduction to this thesis.

μάντις Stilbides had died a few months previously, and so he would have been relying on a new μάντις to help him to interpret this overwhelming omen.

According to Thucydides' account it was the job of the seer to determine the prescribed action in response to the eclipse, but according to Plutarch's account it was Nicias who requested that the withdrawal from Sicily be postponed for so long.⁵⁸¹ Plutarch in his account states that in Autocleides' *Exergesis* it is written that the required period of reaction necessary after a solar or lunar event was three days, not three weeks. He also adds that the Athidographer and seer Philochorus states that the correct interpretation of the eclipse was that it was in fact favourable to fugitives '*for deeds done in fear are in need of concealment, whereas light is an enemy to such deeds.*'⁵⁸²

Flower suggests that Autocleides and Philochorus were able to comment so freely due to the fact that they had the gift of hindsight (as they were writing in the third century B.C.); in addition, he adds that it is likely that they felt a need to justify the validity of divination as a source of knowledge by explaining where Nicias and his seer went wrong in their interpretation.⁵⁸³

Diodorus places the decision for remaining at Nicias' feet, yet his decision was still made on the advice of the soothsayers.⁵⁸⁴ In my view it is more important to go by Thucydides' account as much as possible as he is the contemporary source. What is difficult when looking at these historical events is that scholars of the subject (as Flower previously observed) have the gift of hindsight; we know how these decisions impacted upon the outcome of events.

It is important when evaluating this decision that we only consider the current facts at the time which would have affected the decision making process. Now clearly the Athenians wished to withdraw as the campaign was evidently unsuccessful, but undoubtedly there would have been some reluctance to take this course of action due to the reaction that would be waiting for the Athenian force upon their return to Athens.

⁵⁸¹ Plut. *Nic.* 23-24; Thuc. VII:50.4.

⁵⁸² Plut. *Nic.* 23.

⁵⁸³ Flower (2008b) 116-117.

⁵⁸⁴ Diod. Sic. XIII:12.6.

Thucydides implies that Nicias was well aware that he was likely to be prosecuted and even exiled or executed for such an unsuccessful expedition, especially as so many Athenian resources were used and wasted in the endeavour.⁵⁸⁵ No doubt this attitude would have spread among the troops who wished to return home victorious.

Certainly their situation was not the most positive, but at this stage it was not severely dangerous and so, in my view, it does not appear that it would have appeared that dangerous to the Athenians if they postponed their withdrawal, especially when confronted with such a vivid omen. Stephen and Fatoohi (2001) have examined the eclipse and can give us an idea of what it would have looked like to the Athenian force.

*'This would start at 8.15pm (about 1.5 hours after sunset) and end towards midnight (11.40pm). Totality would last for about 45 minutes (between 9.35 and 10.20pm) and during that time the sky would be considerably darkened. Following the characteristic pattern of total lunar eclipses, the Moon would probably turn blood red in colour, or may possibly have even disappeared from sight for a while.'*⁵⁸⁶

Flower (2008b) also highlights a partial lunar eclipse which would have occurred in the early spring of the same year (4th March 413 B.C.), which would have been visible from Syracuse. Surely two lunar portents in the space of six months would have caused much alarm and debate amongst the Athenian troops and their generals. From this lunar omen the decision was made to stay and scholars of the Sicilian Expedition see this as the decision which sealed the fate of the Athenian force.⁵⁸⁷ Even if the seer did recommend a longer wait, the final decision lay with Nicias and ultimately the responsibility sat with him too for the events which occurred as a result of this decision.

Arguably one of the more interesting outcomes of the failed Sicilian Expedition was the change in attitude to independent diviners as a result of their predictions and interpretations

⁵⁸⁵ Thuc. VII:48.4.

⁵⁸⁶ Stephenson and Fatoohi (2001) 249.

⁵⁸⁷ Flower (2008b) 117.

envisaging Athenian success in Sicily. That infamous passage of Thucydides in which he describes the anger of the Athenians towards ‘*the χρησμολόγοι and μάντις and all those who by the influence of religion had at the time inspired them with the belief that they would conquer Sicily*’ demonstrates a clear change in Athenian attitudes towards independent diviners as a result of these events.⁵⁸⁸

Even if this was not a permanent shift, it demonstrates that arguably for the first time (according to Thucydides at least), we have here an instance of an entire city state questioning the μαντική or at least the motivations of certain independent diviners. So much so that some credit this moment as the pivotal time in which the prominence of independent diviners in the city state begins to wane.⁵⁸⁹

Flower disagrees as there are several seers whom we know of who operated in Greece during the hellenistic period, and there is even evidence on an inscription (dated 2nd century B.C.) which cites an official position which evolved in Athens called the ‘official seer to the board of generals’.⁵⁹⁰

This clearly demonstrates that independent diviners still maintained their prominence within a city state. It is far more likely that Athenian anger at the failure of the Sicilian expedition was aimed solely at the independent diviners involved and questioned their own capabilities rather than losing faith in the entire art of divination itself.

Thucydides is a very intriguing source when it comes to the study of divination, mainly because he did not seem to place the same amount of emphasis on the art as other ancient writers. Take Herodotus for example: it appears in his work that he believes very firmly in divination. The fact that he takes time to refer to oracles from oracular collections demonstrates that he places some belief in their predictions.⁵⁹¹ Thucydides, on the other hand, implies that divination needs to be contemplated very carefully as part of a military decision, but not necessarily as an overriding factor.

⁵⁸⁸ Thuc. VIII.1.1.

⁵⁸⁹ Bremmer (1996) 109.

⁵⁹⁰ Flower (2008b) 122.

⁵⁹¹ Hdt. VIII:20.

‘Thucydides implies that it was in Nicias’s power, had he been less susceptible to Divination, to overrule the sentiments of his troops and the recommendation of his seers.’⁵⁹²

Despite the opinion of some scholars that Thucydides did not have much interest in divination, it is not apparent in this account that he was of that inclination. He does not blame the practice of divination for the decision to postpone withdrawal from Sicily, but instead looks to the seers’ *interpretation* of the sign and Nicias’ final decision to remain for such a long duration. At no point does he suggest that the lunar eclipse should have been ignored.

Another interesting episode, recorded in Plutarch’s life of Dion, describes another lunar eclipse which occurred when Dion was about to set off from Zacynthus to Syracuse to eject the tyrant Dionysius II. This caused much concern amongst the soldiers but was interpreted positively by Dion’s seer Miltas as signifying that Dion would successfully put an end to the tyranny. It may well be that in this particular instance there was a clear alternative interpretation to this eclipse in comparison to that which occurred in 413 B.C., but it is also very likely that Miltas had in mind the events of the failed Sicilian Expedition and strategically chose to ensure that there was no delay in proceedings.⁵⁹³

From a military perspective it would have been important to get to Sicily as soon as physically possible to ensure that Dionysius II did not have much time to prepare his defences.⁵⁹⁴ It also happened that we have record of several omens occurring for Dionysius II in advance of Dion’s arrival.⁵⁹⁵

What is interesting in historical accounts from this period is that many sources choose to make note of occurrences that might well have signified future events if they had been interpreted correctly at the time. Often the immediate view on reading these accounts is to assume that these are post-eventum insertions both to make the account of events more

⁵⁹² Flower (2008b) 116, see Thuc. VII:50.4.

⁵⁹³ Plut. *Dion*. 24. See Kett (1966) 60-61 and Roth (1982) 279-280.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

interesting and also to demonstrate the gods' involvement in what transpired (apart from incidents such as the mutilation of the Herms - as there does not seem to be any doubt that this occurred before the departure of the Sicilian Expedition).

It seems more important to me to consider the fact that the ancient sources felt the need to record such potentially coincidental occurrences in order to demonstrate why events unfolded as they did. Irrespective of whether these omens are genuine or not it is clear that the sources felt a need to emphasise divine involvement. Another example of this is an omen which was observed at Delphi before the Sicilian Expedition, when ravens descended and defecated upon a statue of Athene. This was another clear bad sign which was disregarded by the Athenians before their departure.⁵⁹⁶

b). Independent Diviners as Politicians:

Diopieithes was an Athenian χρησμολόγος active in fifth century B.C. Athens. Flower treats him solely as a χρησμολόγος.⁵⁹⁷ Plutarch suggests that Diopieithes tried to impose a decree against impiety shortly before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian war.⁵⁹⁸ This demonstrates clearly that it was perfectly acceptable for an independent diviner to play a political role (in Athens at least) alongside his religious practices. Lampon and Hierocles are also examples of independent diviners who achieved high status in Athens at this time; both men played leading roles in the foundation of Athenian colonies and were rewarded for their contributions to Athenian political life.

A Diopieithes also appears thirty years later at the turn of the 4th century B.C. in Sparta and he is actively involved in the debate concerning who should succeed the recently deceased King Agis. The usual custom in Sparta was that the eldest son should automatically succeed his father, but in this instance the younger brother of King Agis, Agesilaos, claimed that he

⁵⁹⁶ Plut. *Nic.* 13.

⁵⁹⁷ Flower (2008b) 124.

⁵⁹⁸ Plut. *Per.* 32.

was the worthy successor. This was due to rumours that the King's son Leotychides was in fact a bastard.⁵⁹⁹

Diopieithes appeared in the account on the side of Leotychides. He referred to an oracle which warned the Spartans to '*beware of a lame kingship*'. This oracle was an apt choice in support of Leotychides' bid due to the fact that Agesilaos was in fact deformed in one leg and this interpretation of the oracle appeared to have settled the matter until Lysander intervened. Lysander was an ambitious Spartan general who felt that having Agesilaos as King would be more advantageous to him than if Leotychides succeeded. Lysander then interpreted '*lame kingship*.' to refer to a kingship crippled by impure blood, i.e. not the true blood of Herakles. Lysander's interpretation won over the Spartans and Agesilaos was proclaimed King.⁶⁰⁰

There have been many debates about whether this Diopieithes is the same as the Athenian politician cum χρησμολόγος thirty years earlier.⁶⁰¹ Despite the fact that there may be clear chronological issues, it is not entirely unfeasible for this to be the case. We know that seers travelled often in search of work and due to this it would be unsurprising to see an independent diviner appear in a multitude of locations.

That said, it does look unusual to a modern observer to see that if these Diopieithes are truly the same man and Diopieithes in the past played an active role in Athenian politics, is it not unexpected that the Spartans would welcome him into such an intimate decision making process, even if he was a religious specialist?

I think the answer here is that despite the clear temptation to be suspicious and mistrustful it is essential to consider this from the perspective of the Spartans. Ultimately the Spartans were pious people above all else and if an independent diviner presented them with an oracle pertinent to their dilemma, they would have accepted it without question or mistrust. The oracle represented the view of the gods in this debate and evidently it presented a warning

⁵⁹⁹ Plut. *Alc.* 23. Plutarch suggests that Alcibiades slept with King Agis' wife whilst in exile in Sparta and cites this as the main reason as to why he had to leave Sparta and flee to Persia.

⁶⁰⁰ Plut. *Lys.* 22 and *Ages.* 3.

⁶⁰¹ For a treatment of this, see chapter III 90-91.

to the Spartans to consider their choice of king very carefully. The key pressure with ambiguous oracles such as this is that a correct interpretation of the message is paramount.

One could argue that the Spartans did in fact choose incorrectly, not only by the fact that Agesilaos was physically lame, as indicated by Diopeithes, but in the reality that under Agesilaos' leadership the Spartans suffered a crippling defeat at the battle of Leuktra and Sparta struggled to regain her prominence as a leading Greek city state, so much so that when Philip of Macedon conquered Greece he paid the Spartans no heed as serious opposition.⁶⁰² That said we will never know for certain what sort of king Leotychides would have made, or whether Sparta would have flourished under his leadership.

Irrespective of this, the significance of this episode is that minus the hereditary element which has been discussed previously,⁶⁰³ it is clear that for the Spartans at least, the previous employers of a seer were not of importance; it seems that the loyalties of an independent diviner were not of critical concern in all situations. As Spartan eagerness to employ the seer Teisamenos demonstrates, the most important aspect of an independent diviner was his mantic ability and clearly in this account Diopeithes was deemed a worthy religious representative of the gods' will.⁶⁰⁴

iii). The relationship between seers and their employers:

The rapport between a μάντις and his employer was of great importance and this is evident in the sources of both history and myth. An employer needed to have a talented religious specialist to hand in order to successfully complete whatever task was ahead of them: without this assistance there would have undoubtedly been additional pressure and fear that the enterprise would fail entirely without divine assent.

Calchas was crucial to the Greeks in determining the cause of Apollo's plague just as Stilbides was indispensable to Nicias. Despite the fact that seers were in a sense obedient to

⁶⁰² For more on 4th century B.C. events, see Hornblower (2002).

⁶⁰³ See chapter II 56-57.

⁶⁰⁴ Hdt. IX:35.

those who had hired them, in the way that an employee is (in theory) respectful to their employer, there is in addition an element of control evident on the part of the μάντις.

Clearly a μάντις required employment and as a result of this was reliant upon an employer to hire and pay him. That said, there was obviously a need for a talented μάντις as a religious specialist, otherwise he would not have been employed in the first place. The role of a seer was to interpret messages from the gods and advise a general or king as to the best way to achieve their desired aims with the gods' approval.

A seer represented a divine view of a certain situation and as such was keeping an eye on the actions of a king or general. The general or king usually chose his own seer and often these sorts of partnerships endured for long periods of time, often for more than one campaign or life event.

Once a good working relationship had been established, it would have been sensible for the king or general to maintain this and retain the μάντις in employment if it seemed propitious to do so. Nicias and his seer Stilbides are an example of a famous 'pairing' of seer and general.

Additionally, Alexander the Great and Aristander of Telmessus worked together very closely until Aristander's death and we know that Alexander kept many seers close by him as advisors on his campaign. It was very important that the king or general trusted the skill of his μάντις, but we know from Xenophon that this was not always possible and so it was prudent for a king or general to have knowledge of basic divinatory interpretations.

On the battlefield especially the interpretation of the μάντις was made during a life or death situation. Hegesistratos of the Telliadae was the μάντις who interpreted the entrails for Mardonius at the battle of Plataea; the incorrect decision to engage when the entrails indicated defensive action proved fatal to the Persian side.⁶⁰⁵ The correct interpretation of entrails by a μάντις, along with a smart decision on the part of the general as a result of the μάντις' interpretation, was essential to the survival of an army.

⁶⁰⁵ Hdt. IX:37.

Now arguably the μάντις had no reason to misinterpret the signs unless by accident or divine will, as often this would prove fatal for him too. That said it was important for the general or king to keep the μάντις happy, so that this could be achieved and harmonious work could ensue. Xenophon's *Anabasis* presents a clear example of an instance in which the μάντις is dissatisfied and so causes trouble within the ranks of the army in order to achieve his aims.⁶⁰⁶

Ultimately both employer and μάντις needed one another to complete a successful expedition. Even if each individual had their own agenda it was essential for both parties to realise that it was in their best interests to remain on good terms, so that their aims might stand a greater chance of becoming realised. The difficulty with this approach is that it gives the impression that there is a constant power struggle between an employer and a μάντις, and this was not always necessarily the case.

It also implies that a μάντις was willing to hold his abilities over an employer to ensure that the course of employment ran as the μάντις would have hoped, and this in itself implies that the μάντις did not believe in his own τέχνη. Either that or he had the hubris to believe that he would be able to influence the result of his enquiry to his own benefit. This to me seems like too critical an approach, it is essential when examining ancient civilisations to try to observe events from the perspective of the local population as much as possible.

There are some individuals of particular interest during this period who may well not have needed a seer especially but chose to do so. Xenophon has already been highlighted for possessing this ability, but we have not considered other important individuals who were also required to perform important religious functions. The Spartan kings, for example, were required to perform sacrifices, such as τὰ σφάγια border crossings when leaving Sparta on military campaigns.

The difficulty that we have in the few sources that we have discussing such things is that as many sources often did not feel the need to mention the presence of μάντις, it is difficult to know for certain whether the Spartan king was responsible for overseeing the

⁶⁰⁶ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29.

sacrifice, or whether he physically performed it in person, or even whether a μάντις oversaw the sacrifice, but credit for its interpretation was given to the king.

In depictions of the performance of sacrifice on Greek art, pottery and friezes, we are often presented with a youth performing the physical sacrifice under the observation and guidance of the seer. What is interesting about these images is that they are a strong indicator that the hypothesis of apprentices accompanying independent diviners on campaign is highly likely to be true.

For example, Nicias's seer and companion Stilbides died whilst on expedition in Sicily, but when the lunar eclipse occurred there were other seers present to provide an interpretation: now either these were additional employees required for the event of the lead seer perishing during the expedition or they were in fact apprentices of his art and developing their own skills in the area of μαντική. Perhaps that is why the interpretation of the lunar eclipse is so hotly contested: if an inexperienced μάντις was required to interpret the omen it may well have caused him to make a decision very different to what his predecessor would have recommended due to his own inexperience. That said if set specifications of possible interpretations to particular omens did exist, then any μάντις would have come to the same conclusion.

From the many different mythic and historical accounts which we have in the sources there are instances which describe the relationship between seer and employer. The *Iliad* is very informative in this respect. In Book I of the text Agamemnon speaks to Calchas in ire after Calchas suggested the return of Chryses as a solution to appease Apollo and end the plague upon the Achaeans.

'Prophet of evil, never yet have you spoken to me a pleasant thing; ever is evil dear to your heart to prophesy, but a word of good you have never yet spoken, nor brought to pass.'⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁷ Hom. *Il.* I.92.

Nevertheless, he had no choice but to adhere to Calchas' recommendation and return Chryses to her father.

This is a very interesting passage, as it demonstrates that the relationship between a seer and employer was certainly capable of becoming tempestuous. Even though Agamemnon was king among kings, he still could not afford to ignore the will of the gods as communicated by Calchas.

iv). Corruption in seers:

For a μάντις reputation was everything, there was pressure to perform well not just in sight of completing the initial task at hand, but a μάντις would need to consider his next post. If he was successful in his interpretation this would be another achievement to take with him to his next appointment. So there was a pressure that was not alleviated purely by verifying one's lineage: it was necessary to prove that these skills could be put to good use, as any mistake could destroy that reputation in an instant.

The role of a μάντις was not an easy one; the position was treated with scrutiny, not because the art itself was questionable but because the individual was fallible. Occasionally there are instances in the sources in which the integrity of the μάντις was called into question; either through an issue of potential bribery or some other means of corruption.

It is not unlikely that in some instances the μάντις would have an alternative agenda, either through pressure to read the entrails in a certain way or because the actual response was not the desired sign and so it was ignored. We have instances in the sources not only of μάντις ignoring or misreading the signs, but also of kings, heroes or generals ignoring the advice of the μάντις.⁶⁰⁸ In both instances there were usually consequences to be suffered for this oversight.

One of the more famous instances of corruption in seers is found in Herodotus: that of the χρησμολόγος Onomacritos. (N.B.) According to Herodotus,⁶⁰⁹ Onomacritos was a

⁶⁰⁸ Hegisistratos at the battle of Plataea is the common example: see Hdt. IX:41.

⁶⁰⁹ Hdt. VII:6.

renowned χρησμολόγος during the tyranny of the Athenian Peisistratos. He held a proud place in Peisistratos' court as a speaker and collector of oracles and he managed to maintain his prominence after the death of Peisistratos and the accession of his two sons to power, Hippias and Hipparchos.

This position was maintained until a rival of his, Lasos of Hermione, allegedly discovered him fabricating an oracle which predicted that the island of Lesbos was going to collapse into the sea. This accusation was believed to be true and resulted in Onomacritos being ejected from Athens. The account of these events in Herodotus is very useful to us in many different respects.

Firstly, it provides us with our first instances of χρησμολόγοι; the term does not appear in the sources before Herodotus. It also describes not only one, but two χρησμολόγοι practising in Athens at any one time. Now, by all accounts it seems to me to be perfectly logical that there would be more than one seer in employment in Athens at this time and that inevitably they would be in competition with one another.

Because of this competition it is nigh impossible to ascertain for sure whether Onomacritos was truly fabricating oracles or not, as Lasos may well have been trying to eliminate his competition and take Onomacritos' place of favour at the court of the tyrants. We will never know for sure, but it is still an interesting passage nonetheless. We know from Herodotus that χρησμολόγοι carried with them collections of oracles credited to famous seers of myth such as Musaeus and Bacis. Presumably these were written on clay tablets and moved from place to place with the seer.

What I would especially like to know from this account is how exactly Lasos discovered Onomacritos forging an oracle and how did he prove that it was false? If both χρησμολόγοι were working with their oracular collection preserved on clay tablets, was it that Lasos stumbled upon Onomacritos in the process of forging an oracle upon a tablet? Other authors⁶¹⁰ have suggested that Lasos and Onomacritos competed by having a verbal

⁶¹⁰ Hdt. VII:6. See Shapiro (1990) 335-345 and Dillery (2005).

competition of oracular recital, partly I think to translate χρησμολόγος as literally as possible (speaker/singer of oracles): does this interpretation then mean that Lasos was able to best Onomacritos in some sort of verbal debate and somehow embarrass Onomacritos and damage his credibility in the process?

It is a fascinating discussion to which it is doubtful we will ever truly know the answer. In my opinion, if Onomacritos had managed to hold a position of high favour with the Peisistratids for such a long duration of time, surely Lasos would have to have found some pretty damning evidence against him in order to get him exiled from Athens entirely as punishment for his deceit?

v). Historic Seers:

It seems that from the many representations of seers presented to us in the sources it is quite difficult to recreate the image of a 'typical' seer and to my mind this is because a 'typical' seer did not necessarily exist. Naturally when asked to picture a Greek seer one is most likely to go for an older man, who performs sacrifices to appease kings, leaders and people, usually on a campaign of some kind, but this type of seer is only one of his many facets. From the evidence that we have it seems clear that Greek seers existed at all levels of society and they were most likely to be from a range of backgrounds.

We know from accounts of fifth and fourth century seers that the seers who held these positions of prominence and status within city states or allied to certain individuals were for the most part from aristocratic families themselves, who often had their own long heritage of seercraft, but this was not necessarily universal. We know from Isocrates of Polydamas, who learned the art of seercraft from a book of seercraft, left to him by an old seer who had died. He was still a practising seer without having experienced the 'specialist tutorship' which made the name of many individual seers and their mantic families.

So, what of the appearance of a seer? Aristophanes' *Peace* tells us that they may have worn a crown of laurel, as seen in his depiction of Hierocles. Among other seers, Megistias is described by Herodotus as a warrior and a member of Leonidas' army, who remained at

Thermopylae and died with his comrades, despite foreseeing their deaths on the previous day. Unfortunately, the historical prose accounts of the fifth and fourth centuries spare little time describing the physical appearance of seers, and so in order to answer this query we need to explore the literary evidence available.

I know that to some extent you have to recognise that the literary evidence will possess some additional creative flair, but at the same time the author would still have to describe physical qualities or attributes for seers which were recognisable to the audience and clearly associated with them. Teiresias, although a seer of myth, is described in the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and is depicted as quite elderly.

Again in myth there are discrepancies. It seems that there are two main depictions of seers presented in the literary and historical works of the fifth and fourth centuries, almost like two sides of a coin. On the one hand, you have a strong and fearless warrior μάντις, like Amphiaraus, who is capable of both interpreting messages from the gods but also in some circumstances leading armies or groups of men into battle, or alternatively faithfully joining their leader's cause until the end.

Or on the other hand, we have the depictions of the sage man, often old, who has helpers to assist in his sacrificial rituals and who in some instances can spontaneously prophesise (in myth at least) in order to bring an obnoxious leader back down to earth.

In the latter instance, you are given the impression of a more nomadic, travelling seer, but one whose renown precedes him at all destinations. He is not necessarily summoned, but appears as required for the role that he plays in the myth and this is where the sage-type depiction differs to historical account. The impression that we are given of historical seers is that they are employed for specific divinatory purposes, although Thucydides and Herodotus do provide us with instances within the city state in which seers or oracle-mongers are present in state affairs (mainly within Athens) in which they offer oracles and/or interpretations to existing oracular messages.

Whether they have been hired or invited for that specific purpose is unclear: although from Thucydides 8.1.1. it is quite indicative that the Athenians were angry at those seers who

had sung of Athenian success at Sicily, the passage does not necessarily seem to indicate that they were requested to publicly comment on the success of the enterprise.

This depiction of historic seers commenting en masse on city affairs in public also seems to be indicated in Herodotus in the instance of interpreting the wooden wall oracle, and also in Aristophanes' *Peace*: unfortunately, in these accounts there is little depiction of the physical appearance of these seers. Although personally I find it very unlikely that they were in regular practice of working together en masse, it is much more plausible that they were aware of the public decisions required and wished to gain further employment, renown or both by having their interpretations heard and adhered to.

Interestingly in most of these moments of public revelations the course of action recommended by the independent diviners is often either disregarded entirely, or it is adhered to and backfires to the extent that it damages the reputation of the independent diviners. Whether this is the purpose of each author is unclear: in the case of Aristophanes and Thucydides, one could argue that this might be a mechanism to further damage the reputation of seers at this time, but for Herodotus at least I do not feel that his opinion of seers could be easily argued as negative as they feature so frequently throughout his work.

In terms of warrior μάνταις it seems clear that their role cannot have been just to serve as a religious specialist. In instances where τὰ ἱερά and τὰ σφάγια were performed before battle we do not hear of the role of the seer being complete until the next engagement or departure of camp. I would imagine that a seer was required to engage in battle along with his peers/countrymen, and epigraphic evidence of seers appearing frequently on battle casualty lists would certainly support this. That said, the fact that they feature frequently on casualty lists might also indicate that not all seers were particularly good soldiers.

Aristander of Telmessus, however, was Alexander's seer for many years and survived frequent battles whilst he accompanied Alexander on his quest to conquer the known world.

vi). The representation of seers in ancient Greek art:

Greek art is another insightful source when it comes to contributing to our understanding of ancient Greek attitudes towards both mythical and historical independent diviners. The fact that depictions of ancient Greek seers have survived can be informative in itself. First and most obvious is the fact that some ancient Greek artists deemed seers worthy of depiction and this demonstrates clearly that the parts that they played in the events of the past were of great interest to the ancient Greeks.

Secondly, these depictions can be very informative when it comes to how the artists have chosen to represent seers. Areas of scrutiny that provide clear information would be how seers were clothed, what their age and gender was, is it clear that they are particular famous seers from Greek myth or historical events, or has the artist chosen to represent seers in general. Naturally without written information these interpretations are conjecture, but certain sensible suggestions may well be far closer to the truth than one might originally consider.

Another very useful aspect of depictions of seers in ancient Greek art that can be explored is what the actions the represented seers are actually in the process of completing. Are they depicted performing sacrifices or interpreting the flights of birds, perhaps they are experiencing divine inspiration or actually engaging with a deity. From these representations we can glean two things: initially we can gain a sense of what these ritual practices actually entailed, and from this we can learn more about these different processes of divination. Alternatively, as we have no way of knowing whether the artist was ever a witness to these ritual practices, we can gain an informative insight into how these ritual processes might have been perceived by ancient Greek artists. This in turn provides us with some very useful material when considering the reception of seers in ancient Greece.

A really insightful and emotive representation of an ancient Greek seer is the depiction of Iamus that survives on the east pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. The pediment sculpture illustrates the moment leading up to the race between Pelops and Oinomaos. The two racers are positioned close to the apex of the pediment, with Zeus positioned between them. Oinomaos is explaining the rules of the race to Pelops and both men are flanked by women.

The seer Iamus is positioned on the right-hand side of the pediment. He is arranged in a seated position and his head and body are turned towards the discussion at the centre of the pediment. His expression is one of deep concern and it appears that he is looking, not at the main protagonists in the centre of the pediment, but in actuality he is looking beyond that. Perhaps he has witnessed a portent of what is to come in the race (the death of Oinomaos).

This representation of Iamus is very revealing. It shows us a seer potentially experiencing a moment of divine inspiration by glimpsing future events. His hand is raised to his face to echo the concern etched across his expression. He is not clothed on his top half and the sculpture has depicted him with an aged body. He has some form of clothing wrapped around him from the waist downwards; whether this was the usual attire of Greek seers is unclear. I would imagine that this was chosen to demonstrate both his status and age in this particular depiction.

It is interesting to consider whether the positioning of the seer in this image was to make his status at the time clear. As he is seated near the right-hand corner of the image, it would imply that he held a position of little importance at the court of Oinomaos. Personally I prefer to interpret this scene another way. If Iamus had indeed seen a vision of what events were to come, perhaps his positioning represents more how little impact Iamus would have been able to have in stopping future events from unfolding as they did.

He is positioned after the horses, which implies that the start of the race was most certainly imminent. It seems sensible to imagine that the sculptor wanted the depiction to demonstrate the pivotal moment of the story as clearly as possible and this particular choice of representation does so clearly.

vii). Examples of practising Χρησμολόγοι:

Onomacritos is mentioned in Herodotus⁶¹¹ as a χρησμολόγος in service to the Peisistratid family both in Athens and while they lived in exile in the Persian court. Herodotus

⁶¹¹ Hdt. VII:6.

informs us that he assisted Peisistratos first but he then fell out of favour with his sons Hippias and Hipparchos and so he was expelled from Athens for reasons already discussed. Herodotus refers to Onomacritos as a χρησμολόγος and arranger (διαθέτης) of oracles.

The turbulent period of the fifth century B.C. especially seems to be where the niche for χρησμολόγοι has come from. These individuals often travelled across Greece assisting where they found strife and unrest by advising the best course as suggested by their collections in response to portents from the gods themselves or to certain omens which were apparent at that particular time. It seems that for the most part they were accepted. For example, Onomacritos, Amphilytos and Lasos were well received by the Peisistratids, although perhaps this was a short lived favouritism for χρησμολόγοι in the late sixth century B.C.⁶¹²

Sources from the fifth century B.C. such as Aristophanes and Herodotus present χρησμολόγοι as deceitful and inaccurate.⁶¹³ An example from Herodotus to support this would be during the Persian wars, when the Athenians were debating which interpretation of the wooden wall oracle they should accept. The χρησμολόγοι present suggested to the people that the oracle was referring to the hedgerow surround which used to be on the acropolis and that by building a wooden fortification there they would be safe from the approaching invaders.

Themistocles argued against them and won the people over with the ‘correct’ interpretation suggesting that the wooden wall that Apollo was referring to actually meant the Athenian fleet. Those that remained in Athens protected by a wooden wall on the acropolis were slaughtered.⁶¹⁴

It was time for a pondered response and the interpretation of the original sacrifice had to be shared and the advice suggested had to be implemented. Surely it would have appeared that one was trying either to ‘cheat’ the system or at least to anger the gods, as I would imagine that constant petitions of the same question would undoubtedly be irksome if it seemed that the enquirer was deliberately ignoring the advice and instructions offered.

⁶¹² Hdt. I:62-3, VII:6.

⁶¹³ See Hdt. VII:6 for Onomacritos’ expulsion from Athens for falsifying oracles and Aristophanes’ presentation of Hierocles see Aristoph. *Peace* 1039-1110.

⁶¹⁴ Hdt. VII:143.

We know of other instances where the gods were consulted either at an oracular centre or through other means of divination more than once successfully, but this was not an unreasonable number of visits. The Athenians, for instance, only petitioned Apollo at Delphi for a second time after they felt that the initial message from the Pythia would cause upset and despair in Athens in view of the impending Persian invasion.

If there is truth in Herodotus' account, then it seems that they were actually fearful to return to Athens with such an unfortunate prognosis.⁶¹⁵ This proves how much influence a divine message could hold over a city state. According to Herodotus many Greek states chose to consult Apollo at Delphi when faced with the Persian invasion and in most instances their stance was made on the basis of the response from the god. The Argives for instance, remained neutral after consulting Apollo, along with the Cretans, and they had the assent of the oracle, which was not questioned.⁶¹⁶

In Aristophanes' *Peace* the μάντις Hierocles (who is also referred to in this passage as a χρησμολόγος) appears uninvited to interfere with the sacrifices, partly because he does not support the Peace, and additionally because he wants to ensure that he gets the best parts of the sacrifice for himself, as was the custom for whoever oversaw the process. He is treated very poorly by Trygaeus, who is clearly not fond of the χρησμολόγος, and he is eventually physically kicked away from the sacrifice and told to move on.⁶¹⁷

Hierocles was a historical figure in Athens during the latter half of the fifth century B.C. After the quelling of the Euboean revolt in 446/5, Hierocles produced some encouraging oracles and we believe that he was sent to accompany the founding colony who established the cleruchy that was later known as Oreus.⁶¹⁸ Whether these oracles were from his own divine inspiration, from an oracular collection or from his own interpretation of omens or sacrifices is not specified. This is unfortunate as if Hierocles had produced favourable oracles from an

⁶¹⁵ Hdt VII:140-142.

⁶¹⁶ Hdt VII:69.

⁶¹⁷ Aristoph. *Peace* 1039-1110.

⁶¹⁸ Diod. Sic. XII:22.2.

oracular collection then this would signify that he may have been considered more of a χρησμολόγος than a μάντις, as implied by Aristophanes.

viii: Relationship between ruler and μάντις:

The relationship between the strategos or king and the supporting μάντις is a critical one, not just in battle, but for the duration of a military campaign. Trust was a key element in the relationship of these individuals and without such a bond military campaigns could have become a very challenging endeavour. We know that Xenophon depicts Cyrus the Great's father instructing him that he must have a basic understanding of divine signs so that he could avoid being at the mercy of his seers.⁶¹⁹ Even if this was not necessarily the Persian view it was clearly an issue that Xenophon felt quite strongly about. This is emphasised further by the fact that Xenophon himself emphasised that he too knew enough to be able to perform sacrifices himself and we know that he did so when he was asked to take over leadership of the army after the death of Cyrus.⁶²⁰

The *Anabasis* is full of examples of generals performing sacrifices before making important decisions for the army, and a key instance was when there was dissent amongst the troops and they feared that Xenophon was keeping them stationary for his own benefit. Xenophon then invited the entire army (or anyone with knowledge of μαντική) to witness the next set of sacrifices, so that they could bear witness as to the gods' divine will.⁶²¹

It was a perilous decision for a general in terms of what the correct course of action should be after a sacrifice. More often it seems that the safest option was to agree with the interpretation of the μάντις (depending upon the scenario of course), as at least from one perspective if the portents had been misinterpreted then the μάντις could share a portion of the blame.⁶²²

⁶¹⁹ Xen. *Cyrop.* I:6.2.

⁶²⁰ Xen. *Anab.* VI:1.23-25.

⁶²¹ Xen. *Anab.* VI:4.13-17. See above 101 for a full treatment of this episode.

⁶²² See also Dover (1972) 64; Garland (1984) 75-123 and Bonnechere (2010b) 115-133.

Additionally, there are so many instances that have been preserved in the sources of generals rashly ignoring the advice of the μάντις to their disadvantage. Consider Alexander ignoring the advice of Demophon at Mallia in 326/5B.C. in a bid to retain the morale of his soldiers.⁶²³ this did not end well and demonstrates that the advice of a μάντις should be carefully considered, especially as they represented the gods' divine will.

In contrast to this, one of the more interesting instances in Herodotus, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, is the famous 'Wooden Wall' oracle, in which the Athenians inquired at Delphi for advice on how to face the impending Persian invasion and received instructions from Apollo to flee, and that the wooden wall will save them.

After receiving this response there was a great debate in Athens about the correct course of action, and it was only after Themistocles overturned the view of the χρησμολόγοι that the Athenians decided to take to their ships rather than hide behind an actual wooden wall on the Acropolis.⁶²⁴ In this instance the view of the seers is publicly and correctly negated by the general populace and there are several hypotheses that could justify this. It has been suggested that Themistocles had already manipulated the Delphic Oracle to provide that response so that he could persuade the Athenians to leave Athens and put their trust in their naval strength.

Themistocles recognised the strategic dangers of following the interpretation suggested by the χρησμολόγοι to remain in Athens and so took an executive decision to overturn the view and successfully persuaded the Athenians otherwise. It is worth noting here that Herodotus mentions χρησμολόγοι and not μάντις. Additionally, let us not forget that the χρησμολόγοι were providing their interpretation of an oracle brought from Delphi; we are not told in Herodotus that they had presided over any sacrifices themselves to assist the Athenians to discern the will of the gods. Their role here was purely one of interpretation.

Plato's view of the role of a μάντις and their position in the hierarchy of a military campaign is emphasised in his work *Laws*.

⁶²³ Diod. Sic XVII:98.4. For Demophon, see Kett (1996) 32-33.

⁶²⁴ Hdt. VII:143. See Robertson (1987) 1-20; Compton (1994) 217-223 and Barker (2006) 19-23.

‘...τὰ περὶ τὸν πόλεμον καὶ γιγνόμενα καὶ γενησόμενα: καὶ ὁ νόμος οὕτω τάττει, μὴ τὸν μάντιν τοῦ στρατηγοῦ ἄρχειν, ἀλλὰ τὸν στρατηγὸν τοῦ μάντεως.’

‘...in the operations of war; whence the law ordains that the general shall give orders to the seer, and not the seer to the general.’⁶²⁵

In 195E he states that:

‘ἐπεὶ μάντιν γε τὰ σημεῖα μόνον δεῖ γινώσκειν τῶν ἐσομένων, εἴτε τῷ θάνατος εἴτε νόσος εἴτε ἀποβολὴ χρημάτων ἔσται.’

‘for the seer's business is to judge only the signs of what is yet to come—whether a man is to meet with death or disease or loss of property.’⁶²⁶

This observation of the role of a μάντις is very useful as it demonstrates not only a view of how much power a μάντις wielded, but it also summarises in a very basic form what was primarily expected of a μάντις. Yet an interesting observation on the balance of power between a μάντις and a king is surmised by Humphreys, in which he states:

‘...the aristocratic society of the archaic period preferred oracles to omens. Omens could only be interpreted by a specialist ‘μάντις’; such holders of charismatic authority were a welcome check on the power of kings, but a disruptive element in the aristocratic competition for power, based on rotation of office.’⁶²⁷

This work clearly emphasises the view that the interpretations of a μάντις were an unwelcome element in the workings of the aristocratic component of society in the archaic period. It may well be that the interpretations of a μάντις on occasion inconvenienced those

⁶²⁵ Plat. *Laws* 199A.

⁶²⁶ Plat. *Laws* 195E.

⁶²⁷ Humphreys (1978) 237.

individuals in authority, yet these interpretations were a reflection of divine will and as such had to be respected and adhered to as well as possible, as we know to ignore such advice could well have proved damaging to an individual or their efforts in the long run.

The idea that these interpretations were a ‘welcome check on the power of kings’ implies that μάντεις were attempting to rival kings as leading authorities within a city state, and I find this view a rather negative one when approaching the role of μάντεις within the hierarchy of a city state.

We are provided with an insight into the role of μάντεις within the Greek city state in Cicero’s work *De Divinatione*. In the passage below Cicero examines the importance of divination in any well-structured city state and cites Athens and Sparta as examples. Cicero explains that the Athenians had a μάντις present at every public assembly and that the Spartans assigned an independent diviner not only to their kings but in addition they also employed the services of an independent diviner to counsel the Ephors.

‘namque et Athenienses omnibus semper publicis consiliis divinos quosdam sacerdotes, quos μάντεις vocant, adhibuerunt, et Lacedaemoniiregibus suis augurem assessorem dederunt, itemque senibus (sic enim consilium publicum appellant) augurem interesse voluerunt, iidemque de rebus maioribus semper aut Delphis oraculum aut ab Hammone aut a Dodona petebant.’

‘The Athenians, for instance, in every public assembly always had present certain priestly diviners, whom they call μάντεις. The Spartans assigned an augur to their kings as a judicial adviser, and they also enacted that an augur should be present in their Council of Elders, which is the name of their Senate. In matters of grave concern they always consulted the oracle at Delphi, or that of Jupiter Hammon or that of Dodona.’⁶²⁸

This demonstrates plainly the need for a μάντις in everyday situations within the city state, regardless of its political structure, and although Cicero emphasises the importance of

⁶²⁸ Cic. *De Div.* I:95 (43), tr. Falconer.

divination during times of warfare, he still refers to its relevance in times of peace as well as during conflict.

The other interesting item of note from this passage is the last part of the excerpt, which outlines that for matters of great concern the Greeks would consult the oracles of Delphi, Ammon or Dodona. This further emphasises the importance of oracular centres over independent diviners as religious authorities for matters of state importance, rather than everyday matters.

Yet this in itself still stresses that irrespective of the type of media employed for that particular purpose, divination was absolutely necessary at all levels in order to guide the enquirer towards the correct course of action, and Cicero is stating here that the position of the Romans at this time was exactly the same, just with different titles for the religious specialists and practices.

The fact that divination still held such a position of prominence in ancient Rome demonstrates how the attitudes towards the subject in the ancient world were unwavering over this period originating from before the Dark Ages right up until the rise of Christianity. The fact that the Delphic oracle was able to practise for such a long period of time demonstrates the importance of divination in the lives of individuals in the ancient world and this cannot be forgotten when approaching this subject, whatever scepticism a scholar might possess.

It is unsurprising to learn that μάντεις maintained positions of prominence within the ancient Greek city states as we know how important it was for both individuals and cities to be able to consult the gods before making any important decisions and this philosophy was clearly applicable in everyday life.

The difficulty that was experienced in consulting the Delphic oracle regularly has already been highlighted at the beginning of this chapter and so there is no reason to wonder why μάντεις found regular occupations within city states as we know that they could provide a quick divine opinion on a particular query without there being any need for an envoy to be sent to an oracular centre.

However, once we begin exploring the role of an independent diviner within a city state it becomes more difficult to clearly distinguish μάντεις when we are faced by other official religious roles that feature regularly within city states such as Athens, for example exegetai and hierais.⁶²⁹

Inevitably these roles overlap within the ancient sources and we do hear of exegetai and hierais performing similar ritual practices to μάντεις, the only difference being that these particular individuals are considered to be official employees either of the state or more importantly of a religious sanctuary within the city. However, for matters of divination it is customary for μάντεις to be present to interpret or perform the necessary sacrifices rather than these individuals and so they must still be considered to be the main authorities that still serve this important purpose as a part of the ancient Greek decision making process.

That said, irrespective of the religious specialist involved directly, it is clear that there was most certainly a need for divination within a city state to provide either individual or state consultations. Athens is one of the more interesting cities to explore in this area, because of the other religious roles that were in place at the time that can often cause an element of confusion for a modern scholar when attempting to place each role in context.

There is an interesting coverage of the Cretan seer Epimenides in Pausanias, where we are provided with two conflicting accounts regarding the treatment of the seer at the hands of the Spartans. On the one hand Pausanias records an Argive story which states that the seer was captured by the Spartans when they waged war upon the Cretans and that they then put Epimenides to death when he failed to predict good things for them.

The Argives then retrieved the seer's body and buried it in Argos.⁶³⁰ However, there is also an account in Pausanias' work which describes the tomb of Epimenides as located in Sparta. In this passage he states that he believes that the Spartan account is more credible than

⁶²⁹ See Plat. *Laws* 8.828B for his distinction between exegetai, hierais and manteis.

⁶³⁰ Paus. II:21.3. Interestingly, both Kett (1966) 17-80 and Roth (1982) 268-287 seem to have overlooked this seer in their prosopographies.

the Argives' and in another chapter he adds that the Spartans deny fighting with the Cretans in the first place.⁶³¹

These conflicting accounts give us two very different images of the Spartans. On the one hand, we are presented with a representation of an impious city state, which was willing to face the wrath of the gods for punishing their messenger if the responses provided by the μάντις were not as the Spartans had envisaged. On the other hand, we are presented with a city state who potentially hired the services of a renowned μάντις, who then honoured him with a tomb in Sparta after his passing.

This latter presentation of the Spartans is far more in agreement with the representation of Spartan approaches to religion that we have accounts of in the ancient sources. Thus I am more inclined to agree with Pausanias in the fact that it seems far more likely that the Spartans worked with Epimenides rather than taking him prisoner and then killing him for inauspicious interpretations of divination. The other factor to consider here is that the other account of this story originates from the Argives, who spent the majority of the classical period in various states of war with the Spartans. Whenever a truce ended between them, war would resume unless another peace was brokered.

ix. Authority:

In my view it does not seem that independent diviners held any less authority in ancient Greece as purveyors of divination than oracular centres themselves. It is clear from the accounts that we have of occasions where an independent diviner, be that a μάντις or a χρησμολόγος, is presented badly in the sources and is revealed as a corrupt individual, that these instances never impacted upon Greek belief in the validity of divination itself as a system.

⁶³¹ Paus. III:11.11, III:12.11. For a discussion of the family tree of Epimenides, see Herman (1989) 83-93. See also Bremmer (1993) 156, who accepts the Spartan burial account.

This is much the same as the instances that we know of in which the Pythia was corrupted at Delphi;⁶³² this was her own mistake as an individual and her misdeeds failed to impact upon the credibility of Apollo and his sanctuary and so the frequency of consultations was not affected as a result of any discoveries of corruption. This is why in my opinion seers were just as valid an authority as an oracular centre as a means of communicating with the gods: they just employed different methods.

It is clear that individual seers did not necessarily have the same physical presence and authoritative weight as a famous sanctuary in terms of renown, and oracular responses at Delphi were credited as coming directly from Apollo to the Pythia as his vessel; however the messages interpreted by seers did ultimately originate from Zeus or Apollo as the main authorities on prophecy and signs, hence the signs presented to independent diviners and the interpretations made still maintained their own credibility.

The accessibility of independent diviners also worked to their advantage in comparison to the exclusivity of Delphi, although I am sure that ultimately this benefit would have been felt more by the individual enquirer rather than a city-state, who was likely to possess *promanteia* of some kind at Delphi.⁶³³ We know from Herodotus' account of the 'wooden wall' oracle that Athenian delegates were able to consult Apollo twice in one period of oracular activity in which the Delphic Oracle was accessible for consultation, but this is considered to have been a rare occurrence indeed.⁶³⁴

For state consultations, independent diviners were present both to provide an interpretation of the response from an oracular centre, but also to perform the role of the media for any divine enquiry itself. We know that seers were present at meetings of the Athenian assembly and that they attended to both the king and the assembly of Ephors at Sparta.⁶³⁵

⁶³² Hdt. VI:66 for the Spartan king Kleomenes bribing the Pythia. See chapter IV 159 for a discussion of this episode.

⁶³³ For an overview of Delphic procedure see Parke & Wormell (1956) vol I, Flacelière (1976) and Fontenrose (1978).

⁶³⁴ Hdt. VII:140-142.

⁶³⁵ Bowden (2003) 266.

Alternatively, independent diviners were employed to accompany members of a particular city state on a colonisation expedition or a military campaign, in which case the role that they played was that of an intermediary between the expedition party and the gods. Often we come across accounts in which seers were employed in the direct service of prominent individuals, who required their divine expertise; whether these were within the confines of their own home or city state, or out on campaign or expedition.⁶³⁶

So, why consult a seer? As previously noted, they were convenient, for they were a far more accessible means of divine communication than an oracular centre and we know that in terms of Greek religious practices it seems that it was necessary to consult the gods before making any sort of pivotal decision. That aspect of the question has certainly been answered fully.

We know that there were individuals who were not considered to be religious specialists in the area of divination, who had gained a working knowledge of interpreting omens, performing sacrifices and interpreting entrails. These individuals were able to answer their own specific questions which they presented to the gods without the necessary need for a seer. We also know from sources such as Xenophon⁶³⁷ that there were particular omens which were much more widely recognised and understood by the masses and these omens did not always require a religious specialist to interpret them, much as in western society today it is a common superstition among many to greet a lone magpie if you come across it in order to avoid bad luck.

That said, it is logical to presume that just as there were recognisable signs in this τέχνη which could be interpreted without the presence of a seer, there were also many, much more complicated omens and messages which were far outside of a non-specialist's remit, where a seer was most certainly required in order to accurately glean the meaning of the divine message. As touched upon earlier in this chapter, another important factor to consider is that even if an individual was aware of how to interpret signs themselves, they may well have

⁶³⁶ See chapter V 82-89 for a discussion on partnerships between seers and their employers.

⁶³⁷ Xen. *Anab.* III:2.9.

wanted a seer to hand as a more qualified individual, who was able to support the interpretation with their own specialist knowledge.⁶³⁸

In addition, due to their arguably closer link with the gods they would have been able to elevate the authority of their interpretation of the divine message and assist the expedition leader in conveying the resulting decision to his subordinates. What I mean by elevating the authority of an interpretation is this: from the sources it is evident that ancestry especially can be an important area of consideration when hiring a μάντις.⁶³⁹

If hiring a seer to accompany you on a campaign or expedition, surely it would have been prudent to be aware that members of an army might be swayed in agreement towards a certain decision if a famous μάντις was at the root of the interpretation, rather than their aristocratic leader, whose capabilities in the area of divination were unknown and potentially suspect.

I do not believe this to be a sceptical concept, as even if we understand that the vast majority of the ancient Greeks believed that seers were credible and genuine characters who interpreted and communicated divine will, it does not mean that a general could not also take advantage of the presence of a renowned seer to add emphasis to their decision, alongside the religious purpose that they were employed for.⁶⁴⁰

I am not assuming here that a general and religious specialist would be willing to manipulate omens to their advantage; I am merely stating that it would be advantageous to a general to have a diviner's personal interpretation to hand when announcing the results of the divine communication, especially if the divine message was particularly difficult to interpret.

An alternative explanation is that that if a leading public figure possessed enough knowledge to perform public divination themselves, but without possessing an official religious designation in this area, I am suggesting that there was potentially a risk of his audience experiencing doubt at the accuracy of this particular individual's interpretations, as

⁶³⁸ See also 15-16 of introduction.

⁶³⁹ The emphasis on lineage and μαντική is explored in more detail in chapter II 50-52.

⁶⁴⁰ Xen. *Anab.* V:6.29. See Raphals (2013) 252-255 for further discussion of Xenophon and consulting seers.

without direct knowledge of his qualifications or capabilities in this area they might prefer to have a specialist in divination present in order to reassure them that an accurate response was gleaned from this particular enquiry.

When I refer to non-specialists performing public sacrifices I am more referring to generals on campaign than random individuals; a few examples of this have been preserved in Xenophon.⁶⁴¹ Therefore it seems to have been mutually beneficial to all parties to have an independent diviner present for the vast majority of specific enquiries.

From instances in the sources that we have of events turning out contrary to the prediction of the seer, the immediate reason that we are presented with by the sources for this misfortune is either that the seer in question was mistaken in his interpretation, or that the gods were punishing either the seer for some misuse of his abilities or perhaps they wished to punish the employer in some way and so refused to present the seer with a clear and correct message, so that they would decide upon a particular course of action under the illusion that they possessed divine consent to proceed in a certain manner.

This does not mean that seers were received suspiciously in the city state; it just means that there was an understanding that seers were culpable for their actions just as any other individual. As there was undoubtedly a certain amount of apprehension concerning incorrect interpretations, this would surely also influence their choice of religious specialist based on their qualifications and this is another factor that would encourage a leader or general to hire a seer to join his campaign.

As for historical seers, there is an abundance of literary and historical evidence to support their existence along with archaeological discoveries and epigraphic evidence depicting and describing independent diviners fulfilling their roles in varying circumstances, and these records are the evidence that I have referred to throughout this work when exploring the role and importance of independent diviners throughout the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

⁶⁴¹ See Xen. *Anab.* VI:1.23-25 for Xenophon performing his own sacrifice.

Conclusion

In order to conclude this thesis I thought it best to explore initially the decline of independent diviners, then evaluate the conclusions drawn at the close of each chapter, before summing up the work as a whole. This thesis has explored many different aspects of independent diviners from ancient Greece, from their origins and the evolution of the role, to their divinatory practices and reception within the ancient Greek world.

Decline of independent diviners

From the evidence which has been preserved from the end of the classical period onwards, it is difficult to identify when the decline in the consultation of independent diviners first began. Our knowledge of independent diviners from myth and the classical period has reached us because those authors chose to include information about these religious specialists in their works. If sources such as Herodotus, Xenophon or the comic and tragic playwrights had not considered it necessary to write about seers practising their τέχνη, then the only evidence of their existence would be from Greek art and architecture, and inscriptions.

As there are fewer sources from the hellenistic period when compared to those of the classical period, and the writers which we have preserved did not necessarily focus on recording signs and oracles in their works, it is perhaps rather presumptuous to assert that this alone implies a decline in the use of independent diviners and divinatory practices. Especially when we know that consultations at the Delphic oracle continued into the fourth century A.D.⁶⁴²

In addition, the rise of other forms of divination, such as astrology, would have inevitably stolen some of the focus from the more traditional methods. In addition, as a new method of practising divination it was likely to have been the method of choice, perhaps even something of a novelty.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴² Parke and Wormell (1956) I.

⁶⁴³ For an introduction to ancient astrology, see Barton (1994).

Bremmer suggests the following as a reason for the decline in independent diviners and divination:

‘The main influence on the gradual disappearance of oracles and seers from the public domain would have been the development of democracy.’⁶⁴⁴

This opinion stated by Bremmer could not be further from the truth. It is easy to fall into the dangers of making assumptions due to a lack of evidence. Then again, in the classical period it is clear that the role of seers flourished under democracy, as the process for employing seers became more formal and regularised and the role and expectations of independent diviners became far more complex and diverse. If the development of democracy was truly responsible for starting the decline, then surely this would have been more evident in the fifth century.

A more common suggestion is that the decline in independent diviners began as a result of the failure of the Sicilian Expedition, but again, this is incorrect.⁶⁴⁵ Evidence such as the Honours for Sthorys inscription from 394/3 B.C.⁶⁴⁶ and the presence of Agias at the battle of Aigospotamoi demonstrate clearly that seers were still active at this point in time, therefore it is clear that in the early fourth century at least there was no decline in the use of seers.⁶⁴⁷ In truth, the presence of several seers supporting Alexander the Great on military campaign should be sufficient evidence to prove that there was still very much a need for independent diviners in the ancient Greek world during the classical period.⁶⁴⁸

As discussed previously, Thucydides’ description of the anger felt by the Athenians towards the independent diviners responsible for persuading them to invade Sicily is certainly an

⁶⁴⁴ Bremmer (1996) 109. In contrast to this Malkin saw *μαντική* as ‘becoming more specialised the further one progresses into the classical period’. Malkin (1987) 111.

⁶⁴⁵ Mikalson (1983) 40. Mikalson is of the point of view that it was the *χρησμολόγοι* who declined after the Sicilian expedition, but that *μάντεις* continued to practise successfully into the fourth century.

⁶⁴⁶ Osborne (1970) 151-174. See also Bremmer (1996) 108 and Flower (2008b) 103.

⁶⁴⁷ See Paus. III:11.5, X:9.7. See also Weniger (1915) 73-74.

⁶⁴⁸ See Plut. *Alex.* 26, for the seers present at the founding of Alexandria. For further discussion of this, see Flower (2008b) 179-180.

insightful passage, but I find it highly unlikely that this anger was enough for the Athenians to turn away from the practice of divination through independent diviners entirely.

We know from our exploration of the importance of ancestry that the ancient Greeks were heavily influenced by tradition. This one occurrence in which the signs were incorrectly interpreted or perhaps even overlooked entirely, even despite the fact that it was a shattering loss to the Athenians, would still not have been considered devastating enough to alter their perception of the benefits of divinatory practices.

As ever there were particular individuals at fault, not the belief system itself. If nothing else, the firmly established tradition of seers assisting generals during pitched hoplite battles had to persist; if the Athenians had decided not to use seers in this guise then there would have been an overwhelming level of confusion and panic for all parties. It was not possible for divinatory systems such as this to be changed so radically, so soon.

Furthermore, the failure of the Sicilian expedition directly impacted the Athenians, therefore for the sake of argument, even if these events did impact upon their belief in divination for a time, the Athenians were not the only city state to use seers. Independent diviners were a necessary feature of any Greek army; therefore, any suggestion of their decline across Greece being on account of the failed Sicilian expedition I find rather difficult to agree with and it is most certainly a very broad generalisation on the basis of one small catalyst.⁶⁴⁹

What seems most likely to me is that there was a gradual decline with the rise of the Roman Empire. As their own system of divination would have eventually prevailed over the ancient Greek system.

In terms of independent diviners in the classical period, each chapter has treated different aspects of their role and from these chapters we can draw the following conclusions.

⁶⁴⁹ See Powell (1979) 15-31.

Chapter I

The religious specialists whom I consider fall into the category of independent diviners from the ancient Greek world are μάντεις and χρησμολόγοι. These individuals specialised in the τέχνη of divination and their skill set (μαντική) made them highly desirable assets to a city state, as they provided accessible communication with the gods.

As outlined in this chapter they were most certainly two distinct roles, and each role was separate from any sort of oracular centre or religious institution in the ancient Greek world (for the most part),⁶⁵⁰ which is why they are grouped under the heading of independent diviner.

Due to the fact that there is often confusion between the two roles, I decided to refer to them both under this term, as used by Dillery.⁶⁵¹ There were occasions within this thesis where I also referred to independent diviners as seers, but this was more to avoid continued use of the same nouns.

Other religious officials were treated briefly, but the reasons for not incorporating them into the study were clear, and as I was following Dillery's model, I did not wish to include any other form or religious specialist under this heading either and I agree with his reasons for not doing so.⁶⁵²

This chapter also provided an introduction to written collections of old oracles, as utilised by χρησμολόγοι and city states alike. These were typically sought during major events in order to help provide guidance in times of strife and their use is often cited in the ancient sources.

The main purpose of this chapter was to define who μάντεις and χρησμολόγοι were and to explain why I chose to group them under the heading of independent diviners. The introduction to each role was to provide a definition for each type of seer, some background knowledge to the role itself and a history of the scholarship surrounding their definitions before progressing into the ancestry and origins of each role.

⁶⁵⁰ We are reminded of the established positions of members of the Iamidae and Clytiadae families at Olympia. See Weniger (1915) 53-115 for a list of seers at Olympia.

⁶⁵¹ Dillery (2005) 168-171. See chapter I 21-27 for further elaboration on this.

⁶⁵² See chapter I 18-19. See also Dillery (2005) 168-171.

Chapter II

This chapter highlighted clear differences between χρησμολόγοι and μάντεις when exploring the origins and transmission of both roles in detail. Μάντεις have a long history dating back to the events of myth and some mantic families have a clearly established timeline recorded in the ancient literature.⁶⁵³ From this chapter it emerged that there does not seem to have been one clear method of bestowing μαντική between μάντεις, nor is the emphasis on ancestry entirely clear.

Where χρησμολόγοι are concerned, their role seems to have held less divinatory significance, due to their main purpose being to consult oracular collections and offer their findings in a way which made them applicable to current events meriting divine enquiry. As of yet there is no evidence to support the existence of ‘chresmologic’ families, but this could be because for this particular role there does not seem to have been the same emphasis on ancestry that was required for μάντεις, therefore they would not have been necessary.

The most essential conclusion which can be drawn from chapter II is the fact that when scrutinising the evidence it is clear that μαντική was a learned process, it was not innate. The founding μάντεις in many instances had the gift bestowed upon them directly by a deity of some kind. From then onwards, later μάντεις experienced either direct divine interference in terms of bestowing the art of μαντική as time progressed, or they were able to learn the τέχνη. In terms of divine intervention, consider the seer Teiresias, and the two different accounts which exist describing how he was able to acquire mantic abilities: both ended in his receiving the gift of μαντική from either Zeus or Athena directly.⁶⁵⁴ In terms of learning the mantic skill, there were different means of teaching and learning that were explored: the more typical method of learning μαντική was through the teachings of another specialist, usually from the same mantic family, or perhaps more oddly from myth, with the exchange of saliva and within it, mantic knowledge. The transmission of saliva seems to have featured quite

⁶⁵³ Consider the lineage of Theoclymenus as mentioned in the *Odyssey*. See Hom. *Od.* XV:223-264.

⁶⁵⁴ Apollod. *Lib.* III:6.6-7; Call. *Hymn* V:121-6 and Apollon. II:178-93.

prominently in accounts of seers from myth.⁶⁵⁵ There are also sources who have described books detailing the secrets of divination, yet unfortunately these have not survived.⁶⁵⁶

An interesting observation about this, is that despite the ancient Greeks demonstrating awareness of learned μαντική, there was emphasis on μάντεις in particular to demonstrate a long ancestry of talented practising seers, in order to reassure the enquirer that the specialist in question was absolutely skilled and knowledgeable within their field.

Therefore it seems sensible to conclude that although there was no real expectation for the mantic skill to be hereditary, we know from many other instances of positions in ancient Greece that tradition and lineage were essential. Consider the long line of Spartan kings for example. We are aware that on occasion there was doubt expressed over the legitimacy of some of these kings. Alcibiades was said to have sired an heir to the Spartan throne during his time in exile from Athens with the wife of Agis, which resulted in his expulsion from Sparta and his transition over to Persia.⁶⁵⁷ In this particular instance Agis' brother Agesilaos ascended to the Spartan throne instead of his nephew Leotychides, due to the oracle warning of a lame kingship.⁶⁵⁸ This demonstrates that the Spartans were not interested in anything which would weaken the bloodline of their kings, and in fact, they were even willing to break tradition in order to ensure its success, as this example shows clearly.

Where tradition is concerned, The Iamidae and the Clytiadae at Olympia are key examples of individual families were able to maintain a prominent official position for generations, and certain other priesthoods were the same.⁶⁵⁹ Despite any expressions of doubt over legitimacy, for the most part in ancient Greece these individuals were employed

⁶⁵⁵ See Apollod. *Lib.* I:9.11 20ff.; Apollod. *Lib.* III:3.1-2. For an in depth discussion on saliva as a means of exchanging mantic knowledge, see chapter II 32-35.

⁶⁵⁶ For more on books on divination, see Flower (2008) 52-3 and Pritchett (1979a) 73.

⁶⁵⁷ Plut. *Alc.* 23.

⁶⁵⁸ See Plut. *Lys.* 22 and *Ages.* 3. For a treatment of this instance, see chapter III 95 and chapter V 179.

⁶⁵⁹ Consider the Athenian families of the Eumolpidae and Kerykes, who were the hereditary priests of the Eleusinian Mysteries. See Burkert (1985a) 285 for further information on this.

nonetheless and it seems most likely that this was due to the fact that the ancient Greeks loved tradition and were keen to maintain it as much as possible.⁶⁶⁰

Chapter III

The prominence of seers has certainly changed significantly over the evolution of the role from the μάντεις of myth to those of the classical period. The most notable changes in terms of job description were that hepatoscopy, extispicy and the consultation of oracular collections by χρησμολόγοι were introduced and there is little evidence of these practices in ancient Greek myth. By all means animal sacrifice was prevalent and this is clear in Homer and other earlier writers, yet it does not seem that scrutiny of entrails featured as part of that process.

We know from works such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* that the main types of divination practised by the μάντεις of myth were cledonancy, oneiromancy, ornithomancy and spontaneous prophecy, whereas the main aspects of the role for historical μάντεις were all of the above, bar spontaneous prophecy and the additional use of hepatoscopy and extispicy as well.

Indeed, extispicy seems to have become the most prevalent method of divination practised by μάντεις in the classical period, and we are already aware of χρησμολόγοι favouring oracular collections accredited to seers of myth rather than practising the alternative methods of divination. Chapter IV contains a comprehensive treatment of these different methods of divination and refers to many instances from the sources which provide us with useful information detailing them in practice.⁶⁶¹

As for the role itself, it seems that the purpose of historical μάντεις and χρησμολόγοι remained the same when compared to the need for seers in myth such as the demand for Calchas and Melampus. In terms of power, the most prominent difference that can be observed

⁶⁶⁰ Herodotus provides an instance of this in his account detailing the employment of the seer Deiphonus, whose lineage was the subject of debate. Hdt. IX:95. See also chapter II

⁶⁶¹ See Chapter IV.

when comparing independent diviners from myth with those of the classical period is that we have no historical instances of μάντις or χρησμολόγοι becoming kings. Melampus was both a μάντις and a king, although of course what must be noted is that the kingship was something that he was able to negotiate as payment rather than something that he rightfully inherited.

Then again, the rise of democracy severely limited the number of kingships at that time, so it was less likely that a historical μάντις would have been able to obtain a kingship in the first place. Arguably this is the most prominent contrast when comparing μάντις from myth with those of the classical period.

We have already clearly observed the importance of a talented independent diviner throughout myth to the end of the classical period and beyond. Yet, in our historical sources there is no evidence which indicates that an independent diviner was able to negotiate something as prominent as a kingship, nor even are there instances of a μάντις forcing a king to adhere as pointedly to divine will as the instance between Agamemnon and Calchas in *The Iliad*.

It is sensible to suggest that events recounted in myth bear far more creative licence than those events preserved from history, I feel that this is inevitable when recalling events so long past, which already had such magic and mystery surrounding them. I would argue that life lived in times of myth contained far more ‘drama’ and possibility than everyday life for the historical ancient Greeks and so it would be far less feasible for a seer to demand something as powerful as a kingship in compensation for their services.

Even the demands of Teisamenos of Spartan citizenship for him and his brother seem bold enough for the time. It would have been madness for a historical μάντις to demand such a thing. Imagine if Teisamenos had attempted to demand a place as king of Sparta, to break the long tradition of the Heraclid line of kings. The Spartans were most certainly a very pious race, but I doubt very much that they would have contemplated breaking such a long line of powerful historical tradition in exchange for success in battle.

Where the founding of a colony was concerned, both media of consultation were addressed, as an initial enquiry to Delphi was required in most instances by the oikist, whereupon once consent was given to found a colony, a μάντις would accompany the foundation party to the site and perform the required sacrifices in order to safely establish the colony. Hierocles at Oreus is a clear example of this and as an individual who served as both a prominent political figure in Athens and a religious specialist simultaneously; he is most certainly an interesting character for further scrutiny.

Chapter IV

A deeper exploration into the various methods of divination practised by μάντις throughout myth and the classical period has emphasised further the importance of divination throughout ancient Greek civilisation. Accounts such as that provided by Xenophon in the *Anabasis* have demonstrated clearly how essential a μάντις was on military campaign, as there was always a need to perform sacrifices or to interpret omens of some kind. There are also many clear instances which have shown how crippled an army could become if the sacrifices and omens were unpropitious, and a μάντις was most certainly required to sooth those times of strife and to provide a solution in order to improve upon the situation in any way possible.

From this chapter we can put together a much clearer picture as to the procedure of performing and interpreting various types of divination and typical mantic consultations. For example, where military campaigns were concerned, τὰ ἱερὰ and τὰ σφάγια featured prominently throughout a typical day in terms of divination. τὰ ἱερὰ were required upon departing from camp at the start of a new day and before searching for supplies. τὰ ἱερὰ were also performed before most border crossings. Whereas τὰ σφάγια were required whenever an expanse of water needed to be crossed or whenever battle was imminent. These two methods of divination were clearly part of an established routine of divinatory practices, at least where military campaigns were concerned, and they provide a useful insight into both the piety of the ancient Greeks, their need for divine recognition, and in addition, their need for established routines.

When it comes to other methods of divination, recorded instances of what individuals or city states were required to do once an omen, dream or chance occurrence was observed demonstrate clearly that a religious specialist of some kind was most certainly required, whether this was in the form of an oracular centre or an independent diviner relied entirely upon the location of the enquirer when this omen manifested itself and the scale of the omen in terms of what and who its repercussions would impact upon.

For example, when Nicias and his Athenian army witnessed the lunar eclipse, this was a large-scale omen which impacted upon the entire success of this particular military venture, yet with circumstances as there were, there was little likelihood that a consultation at Delphi was feasible from Syracuse on this particular occasion.⁶⁶² Therefore μάντεις were consulted to recommend the best course of action. Whereas, during the Persian wars nearly seventy years previously, the Athenians sent envoys directly to Delphi to ask what the best course of action was in the face of a large invading army, as there was enough time beforehand to explore their alternative options safely.

Each method of divination might have required different ritual practices at different junctures, but there were two main reasons for enquiry which did not change throughout myth to the end of the classical period. There was of course the initial enquiry made by someone to an oracle, μάντις or to a particular deity wishing to learn more about whether it was propitious or not to do one thing or another, i.e. a need to satisfy a curiosity about a forthcoming decision.

Alternatively, there was the action and reaction enquiry where a consultation was required as a result of an unexpected occurrence, a bird omen, a dream or some other kind of chance encounter. Either way, a religious specialist was required in order to provide an answer to these questions and chapter IV has outlined both the various methods which were used by independent diviners in order to answer these questions or the types of occurrences which oracular centres and more typically μάντεις were required to provide an interpretation for.

⁶⁶² For a discussion of the eclipse, see chapter V 175-176. See also Stephenson and Fatoohi (2001) 245-253.

In my opinion the most interesting conclusion which can be drawn from this chapter is that despite the fact that individuals such as Xenophon were able to gain knowledge of mantic practices for themselves, they still chose not to shoulder the responsibility of religious procedures and interpretation solely, but instead they chose to employ specialist individuals to perform these tasks on their behalf. It seems that there are two main reasons for this.

Firstly, surely a commander or city state would have enough responsibilities to consider, without adding such an important role to their repertoire. In addition, the final decision itself still sat with these leading individuals and so it seems far more sensible for them to have a qualified religious specialist accompanying the expedition in order to provide an interpretation for them, especially as it was likely that a particular μάντις might see something that an amateur could miss.

Therefore for a general or leading members of a city state to rely upon μάντις to provide interpretations and to perform specific divinatory rituals surely emphasises the need for religious specialists to take a portion of the pressure of the decision making process off those prominent individuals who were faced with making ultimate choices.

Clearly the final decision still sat with these individuals, but at least with an independent diviner present sharing in the process there was both the element of having a supportive presence nearby and in addition perhaps the hope of sharing the blame if the resulting events were not as the enquirer had hoped. Perhaps this comes across as a rather cynical perspective, but what I am referring to here is simple human nature. Naturally one feels more confident if there is someone else by your side even if they are purely there in a supporting capacity, in addition, if one is nervous about an imminent decision that needs to be made, it is reassuring to think that this supporting individual might also be in line for a share of the blame if the wrong decision is reached.

Chapter V

The principal aim of Chapter V was to address the treatment of independent diviners in the ancient sources in order to try to gain a better understanding of how independent diviners

were perceived and treated in the ancient world. It was also to put together a clearer picture of historical independent diviners especially so that we might better understand their role both within city states and when out on campaign, or when involved in the establishment of a colony on behalf of a particular city state.

Authors such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Aristophanes and Plato provide an extraordinary insight into contemporary thoughts on divination and those who interpreted the signs of the gods. The most interesting concept to emerge from these accounts, and those of others from the classical period, is that it is clear certain authors presented a cynicism where independent diviners and even divination in some places were concerned and it is clear that these doubts most certainly existed.

Thucydides is a source who is often criticised for his omission of religious factors and motivations from his account of the events of the Peloponnesian war, and yet he deems it worthy of mention in his discussion of the doomed Sicilian Expedition, which brought such destruction and hardship to the Athenians at such a pivotal point in the war. When discussing the reaction of the Athenians to the lunar eclipse he makes a point of emphasising that Nicias ‘ἦν γάρ τι καὶ ἄγαν θειασμῶ τε καὶ τῷ τοιούτῳ προσκεείμενος’ ‘for he was addicted to superstition and observations of that kind somewhat too much’.

I would not necessarily use this as a clear example of how impious Thucydides was, but it clearly demonstrates his own doubts at whether a general should be relying heavily upon divination when making important military decisions and this, in my view, is significant.⁶⁶³

Overall conclusion

In this thesis I hope that I have demonstrated clearly that seers were an essential aspect of daily life in ancient Greece, even in those city states where there is less evidence of their presence. It seems that despite the differences between the various city states of the classical

⁶⁶³ Thuc. VII:50.4.

period, their morals and traditions remained the same and this is echoed in the consultations and practices of independent diviners throughout this period.

The importance of seers and divination as a whole is something which every historian of the ancient world should consider when treating the historic decisions made by individuals and city states, especially in times of war. This work also aims to scrutinise the methods of divination employed by these specialists, so that we might understand more comprehensively both the motivations for looking for signs and the need to interpret them.

Ultimately, the level of impact made in Greek city states by independent diviners is a very difficult thing to quantify. It is dependent upon various factors, more notably whether the city state in question permitted independent diviners to play a role within their political structure, in order to have influence in the first place.

Secondly, this impact is also dependent upon each individual independent diviner active in a city state at any one time. Undoubtedly some individuals rose to positions of prominence far higher than others. Thus, if we are to assess the impact of the most prominent individuals in a city state which is far better documented in a city such as, for example, Athens, then it seems clear that independent diviners enjoyed a position of reasonable influence within the city state.

As the democratic constitution of Athens involved the decisions of the many, evidently there was only so much authority that could be entrusted to one individual, and as the independent diviners that we have documented were not archons or strategoi, there was a limit to how much influence they could have had over the decisions of the city state as a whole.

That said, their power was enabled by the need to consult the gods for guidance when deliberating certain actions, thus it was on these occasions that the level of authority of a prominent independent diviner was clearest. As we have seen throughout this work, if there was a need for a quick decision to be made and there was not time to consult an oracular centre – this is where an independent diviner was necessary.

In Sparta especially, instances in which the sacrifices proved unfavourable and prevented Spartan forces from crossing borders demonstrate that in holding the position of a

bridge between the divine and the mortal realm in those moments an independent diviner of any social standing held the keys to the fate of their enquirers.⁶⁶⁴

The fact that those Spartan forces were willing to turn away from the border based upon the results of the sacrifices clearly shows the importance of divine assent and these individuals were the means by which these messages were conveyed and interpreted. I am not emphasising this area to suggest any wrong doing or bribery, although I feel it would be naive to assume that such corrupt instances did not occur at all.

Yet ultimately the fate of the forces still lay with the commander (if the consultation was made with regards to a military campaign), as they could either go along with, or disregard, the recommendation of the μάντις. Cleomenes marched his army along the border and crossed into Argos by sea instead. Cleomenes was able to ‘bend the rules’ by acknowledging the message from the gods to desist from that particular avenue of approach, but rather than abandon the expedition entirely, he decided to circumnavigate the problem by approaching Argive territory from elsewhere.

What I find important when exploring the attitudes and behaviour of certain individuals towards divination is the need to consider how pious that individual might have been. If you think of Nicias and his decision to abide with his soothsayers and remain in Syracuse, even Thucydides mentions that Nicias was an individual who paid too much attention to divination in a way that was detrimental to his skills as a general.⁶⁶⁵

Whereas Cleomenes could have been accused of impiety for disregarding the interpretation of the omen at the border crossing into Argos, yet in actuality he followed it precisely by not crossing that particular border, he just found a way to navigate around the divine message in order to still achieve his goals.

I am still undecided as to the piety of Cleomenes as a king, but I am certain that Xenophon was a very pious general and we know from *The Anabasis* that he paid a very active

⁶⁶⁴ See Hdt. VI:76 for Cleomenes; See Thuc. V:55 and 116 for other instances of unfavourable border crossings for the Spartans.

⁶⁶⁵ Thuc. VII:50.4.

role in divinatory practices whilst on military campaign. It must also be acknowledged though that the instance of him failing to consult the Delphic oracle properly when deciding whether or not to join the Persian expedition, does not necessarily call his piety into question, but definitely demonstrates that he was aware of how to manipulate procedures on occasion to obtain the desired result.⁶⁶⁶

It seems to me that even the most pious of men in the ancient world had the potential to push the boundaries where divine consultation was concerned, especially with regards to independent diviners, but we have also seen instances at other oracular centres too.

Thus the influence of an independent diviner was most certainly of importance, but one is forced to admit that their role was most certainly secondary when compared to their superior commander on military expedition or during the foundation of a colony, and even in a city state environment it was an advisory position, working in tandem with the decision making process of the political framework of each city state.

Irrespective of this, the role of an independent diviner within ancient Greece was fundamental to Greek civilisation at that time, as the ancient Greeks needed a bridge to the divine and independent diviners were able to provide that link.

In terms of achieving the main aims of this thesis, this work has provided a reassessment of the ancient sources and scholarship treating independent diviners in ancient Greece. It works in conjunction as a succeeding piece of scholarship to the work of Michael Flower and aims to complement it as a thesis.

Originality has been achieved through a logical and structured exploration of not just the role and reception of seers within the classical Greek city states but also through a careful analysis of the various types of divination available at the time by scrutinising the ancient sources and discerning both the importance and significance of divination in all aspects of ancient Greek life.

⁶⁶⁶ Xen. *Anab.* III:1.6. See chapter V 128 for further discussion of this occurrence.

Alongside this, the most crucial aspect of this work is exploring how independent diviners were the necessary people positioned to facilitate this need far more than any oracular centre would have been able to.

The most interesting conclusion that can be drawn from this work is the fascinating parallel that can be drawn between the ancient world and current western society. Even today in a time when many are perhaps more distant from religion than mankind has ever been before, we still manage to find and express superstitions and references to the unknown in everyday life.

This often occurs without us even realising the significance of these expressions. Saying 'touch wood', avoiding drains, greeting magpies, etc. these small actions are fascinating seeming as we now live in such an allegedly rational society. What I feel is the key point here is that when attempting to understand the main purpose of independent diviners and indeed divination in ancient Greece, we inevitably find parallels which can be compared to how most people function in today's society.

This is why anthropological approaches are so useful; they are an invaluable window through which we can glimpse how these individuals were treated and received. Just because (for the most part) there is little need for such individuals in western society today, this does not mean that divination and the mysteries of the unknown are lost forever. How many of us consult our horoscope, even if it is purely for entertainment purposes?

What is even more interesting is if it becomes evident that aspects of those horoscopes appear to be a little too close to home. It is that innate curiosity that will ensure that these mysteries are always of interest, unless we reach a time by which their secrets become known to us. It is this interest which drew me to this subject in the first place and into embarking upon writing this thesis. I hope that my interest and passion for this subject is evident and that it has been an enjoyable read.

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